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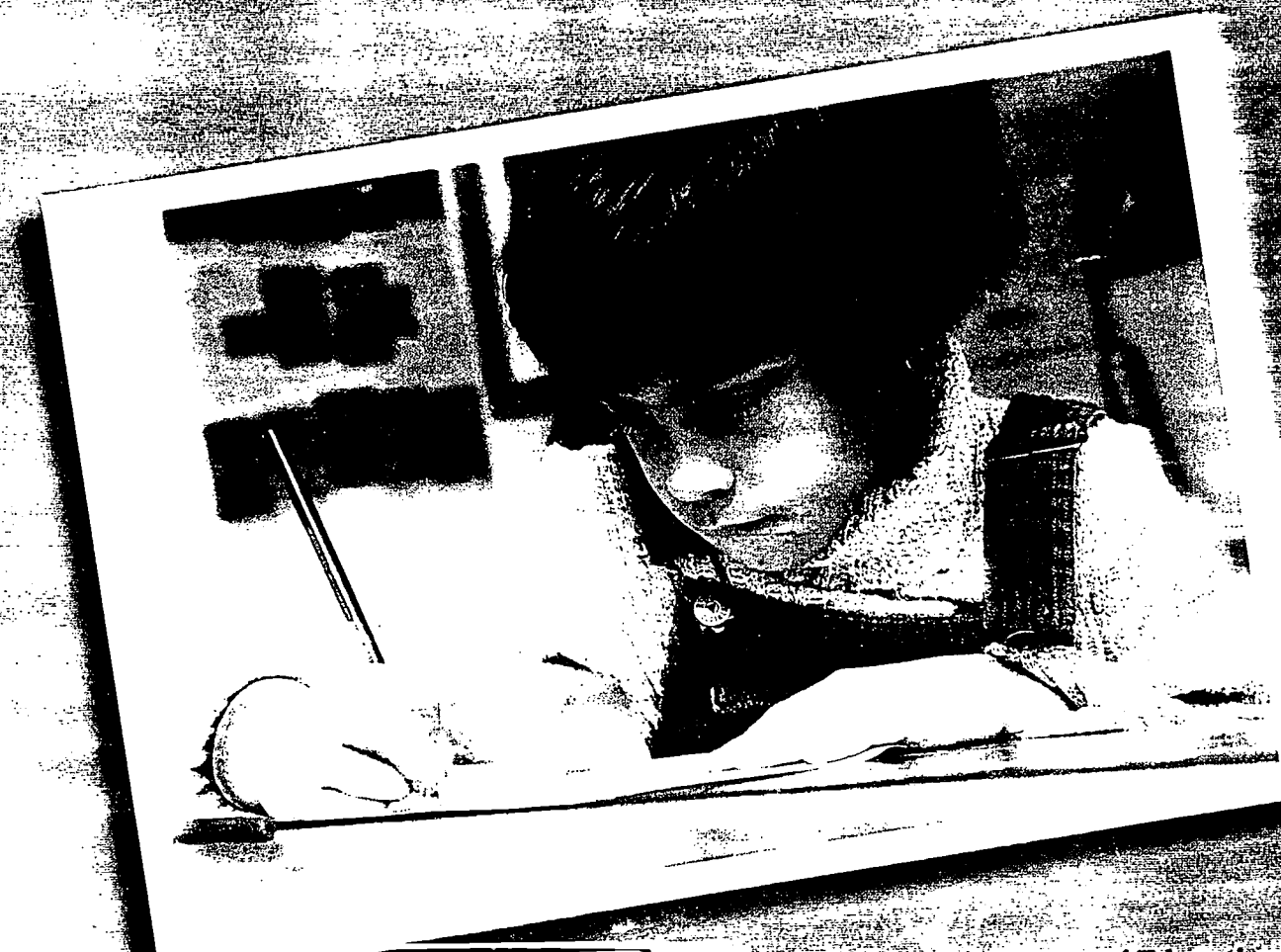
ABSTRACT

This report provides guidance and information on resources to assist elementary schools, parents, community members, and policymakers in implementing a systemic approach to standards-based education. It makes clear recommendations on how schools can achieve a coordinated system in which standards, assessment, accountability, and curriculum are aligned and focused on ensuring that all students meet grade-level standards. Fifteen recommendations are presented, related to 5 components of a standards-based system. Each of the recommendations is followed by a research-based "Rationale" and an example of best practice describing what the successful implementation of the recommendation might look like. The five components are: (1) rigorous academic content and performance standards; (2) assessment and accountability; (3) curriculum and instruction; (4) professional development; and (5) district-level leadership and support. Although schools and districts may start renewal efforts with particular components, no single component will ensure student achievement. (SLD)

Elementary Makes the Grade!



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Elementary Makes the Grade!

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A partial list of other educational resources available from the Department appears on page 91. In addition, an illustrated *Educational Resources Catalog* describing publications, videos, and other instructional media available from the Department can be obtained without charge by writing to the address given above or by calling the Sales Office at (916) 445-1260.

Notice

The guidance in *Elementary Makes the Grade!* is not binding on local educational agencies or other entities. Except for the statutes, regulations, and court decisions that are referenced herein, the document is exemplary, and compliance with it is not mandatory. (See *Education Code* Section 33308.5.)

Prepared for publication by CSEA members.

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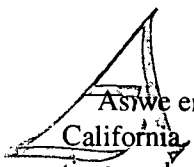


As we enter the twenty-first century, we are embarking on an enormous challenge in California. We are implementing a statewide, standards-based education system for the first time, and we must ensure that all students meet these standards. For those who doubt that this goal is attainable or realistic, I am reminded of Ralph Waldo Emerson's observation, "The secret of education lies in respecting the pupil." We must have faith in our abilities to teach—and in our students' abilities to learn.

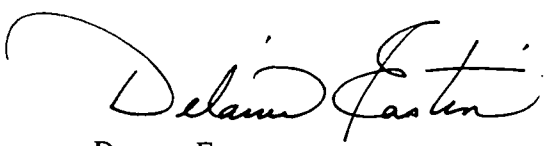
This document, *Elementary Makes the Grade!* calls for a *renewed commitment* by those who believe that every child has a right to learn. It also calls for *renewed action* by elementary educators and others who believe that the work of public schools is not merely to establish high academic standards but also to ensure that all students will meet or exceed these standards.

I established the Elementary Grades Task Force, composed of 14 leading California educators and community members, and I asked them to provide us with recommendations to chart the course of elementary education in the twenty-first century. I urged the group to give us its best thinking regarding the direction that elementary education should take. To guide their task, the members carefully examined *It's Elementary!* the state's 1992 elementary education task force report, and used it as a foundation on which to build their recommendations in this new era of standards and increased accountability.

As we all recognize, the early years of a child's life are crucial in molding that child's future. I can think of no more important job than educating our elementary school students—and educating them well—so that they go on to succeed in middle school, high school, postsecondary education, and the "real world."

I thank the task force members for their excellent work on this document. It is written with the dream that—classroom by classroom, school by school, and district by district—California can reach the goal of attaining high achievement for *all* of our students.

I hope you find *Elementary Makes the Grade!* a helpful resource, and I look forward to our work together as we implement these recommendations.



DELAINE EASTIN
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

Acknowledgments

The California Department of Education wishes to thank the Elementary Grades Task Force for its commitment to this project. The task force members consistently demonstrated their extensive knowledge and compelling advocacy for all elementary students in California. Their thoughtful deliberations resulted in the recommendations that are the foundation of this publication. It is the collective hope of the task force that elementary educators and others in the educational community will work to seriously examine and to implement these recommendations.

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The writers organized the ideas of the task force into a concise document that sets forth the task force's major recommendations, supports them with research and exemplars, and extends them with resources and references.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: A Systemic Approach to Standards-Based Education

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In 1995 State Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin established an Elementary Grades Task Force to provide guidance to educators on implementing standards-based education and to update the grade-level document *It's Elementary!* (California Department of Education 1992). The task force was composed of elementary school teachers, administrators, university faculty, county office of education administrators, parents, and community organization representatives.

It was clear to the Elementary Grades Task Force members that much of the groundwork for California's evolving standards-based educational system was initially described in *It's Elementary!* However, they also recognized that the revision of this document would not, in itself, provide the necessary direction for standards-based reform. A new document needed to address several more recent events and conditions that have affected public education:

- The cornerstone of the first document—a curriculum based on California's frameworks—is now but one of several important components of the state's larger, more rigorous, standards-based education system.
- The current political, economic, and social context in which schools must design and implement standards-based reform differs considerably from that of 1992.
- California's population continues to become much more economically, ethnically, and linguistically diverse.
- Many more English learners must now be educated in English-only classes.
- The teacher-student ratio in classrooms in grades kindergarten through three is significantly lower.
- California has entered a new era of public school accountability, with rewards for improving schools and interventions for underperforming schools.
- Research conducted since 1992 has expanded our knowledge about how children learn and how we can better educate diverse student populations.

During its work, the Elementary Grades Task Force identified several recommendations contained in *It's Elementary!* that it

believed would support the efforts of persons implementing standards-based reform. The task force considered the earlier report's recommendations to be essential elements for elementary reform efforts; for example, a rigorous curriculum, efficient use of instructional time, early intervention and opportunities to learn, authentic student assessment, professional support and systematic staff development for all teachers, and a physically and emotionally enriched student environment.

The Report's Purpose

Elementary Makes the Grade! will provide guidance and information on resources to assist elementary schools, parents, community members, and policymakers in implementing a systemic approach to standards-based education. This document makes clear recommendations on how schools can achieve a coordinated system in which standards, assessment, accountability, and curriculum are aligned and focused on ensuring that all students meet grade-level standards. This document is one of a series of grade-level documents that will describe models for preschool through high school revitalization. *First Class: A Guide for Early Primary Education*, released in September 1999, addresses early primary education (preschool, kindergarten, and first grade) and was developed to increase educators' effectiveness in planning quality programs for young children. Future documents will describe implementation of standards-based reform at the middle-grade and high-school levels.

The Elementary Grades Task Force and the California Department of Education have identified what they believe to be the components and recommendations needed to support student achievement based on rigorous academic standards. The five components and 15 recommendations are as follows:

System Component I. Rigorous Academic Content and Performance Standards	
Recommendation 1:	Create a Standards-Based Learning Environment.
Recommendation 2:	Adopt Performance Standards That Specify, How Good Is Good Enough?
System Component II. Assessment and Accountability	
Recommendation 3:	Require That Ongoing Assessment and Analysis of Student Work Drive the Curriculum.
Recommendation 4:	Communicate Performance Expectations and Results.
Recommendation 5:	Hold Stakeholders Accountable for Their Part in Students' Achievement of Standards.
System Component III. Curriculum and Instruction	
Recommendation 6:	Teach All Disciplines in the Curriculum While Emphasizing Reading, Writing, and Mathematics.
Recommendation 7:	Actively Involve All Students in the Inclusive Core Curriculum.
Recommendation 8:	Implement Aggressive Intervention Strategies.

Recommendation 9:	Build Partnerships with Other Stakeholders to Meet the Needs of the Whole Child.
Recommendation 10:	Develop and Reinforce Positive Character Traits.
Recommendation 11:	Select Effective Instructional Materials and Resources, Including Technology.
Recommendation 12:	Engage in Purposeful Dialogue Between Grade Levels.
System Component IV. Professional Development	
Recommendation 13:	Implement a Professional Development Plan Based on Student Performance.
Recommendation 14:	Provide Mentors and Coaching to Improve Professional Skills.
System Component V. District-Level Leadership and Support	
Recommendation 15:	Provide Adequate District-Level Resources, Support, and Leadership.

Each of the report's 15 recommendations is followed by a research-based "Rationale" and "An Example of Best Practice" describing what the successful implementation of the recommendation might look like. Although examples are based on practices that have been collected from actual schools and districts, the names of specific schools have not been identified. Some of the examples are composites of practices from several schools.

Realizing that it may take time for many schools to fully implement all of the recommendations and that some schools will need additional resources (e.g., time, money, personnel) to achieve full implementation, "Steps Along the Way" are included. By no means meant to be inclusive, each step identifies actions that schools can take to implement a recommendation either partially or progressively. A section titled "Shared Responsibilities" is presented to identify the roles and responsibilities of other people, in addition to school personnel, who may be needed to ensure the recommendation's implementation. In addition, print resources and web sites have been identified to help practitioners implement each recommendation.

The Components as a System

A standards-based system of education is an integrated system in which each component becomes an essential part of the whole. The system requires both the development of strong system components based on current research and best practices and the linkage among individual components. Imagine a large, complex jigsaw puzzle. Each puzzle piece is structurally sound and fits into the whole. The *whole* is the final product—the realized vision or, in the case of a jigsaw puzzle, the picture on the box. Without the picture, it is often time-consuming and difficult to create the final product. Without all the puzzle pieces, the picture may never be completed and may remain merely a vision of what could have been. So it is with standards-based systems. The *picture on the box* that drives our work is a vision of the achievement of grade-level standards by all students. To make this vision a reality, every system component—every puzzle piece—must be not only well designed but also built

to fit with the other components to form a powerful system.

Although schools and districts may start renewal efforts with particular components, no single component will ensure student achievement. If any component of the system is not implemented effectively, the success of the standards-based system is jeopardized.

Jamentz (1998) provides a model (see Figure 1-1) of what schools will look like when they are organized around a commitment to student achievement through a powerful standards-based system.

Figure 1-1
A Standards-Based System in Action

What will schools look like when they organize around a commitment to the achievement of high standards by all students?

Students will:

- Be actively engaged in meaningful work.
- Be able to describe what is expected of them.
- Be able to describe why they are doing what they are doing.
- Demonstrate the habits of rehearsal and revisions.
- Discuss work in progress in terms of its quality.
- Be better able to describe what assistance they need.
- See their teachers as advocates and coaches.

And, therefore, teachers will need the capacity to:

- Understand the community's expectations for student performance.
- Design and conduct instructional activities aligned to standards.
- Analyze (and not just score) student work.
- Make fair and credible judgments of quality.
- Systematically manage data and plan instruction accordingly.
- Communicate specific expectations to students and provide explicit feedback.
- Teach students to evaluate their own work.
- Be relentless in the pursuit of improved performance.
- Give and use feedback.

And, therefore, schools will need to operate in these ways:

- Articulate a collective and clear purpose.
- Conduct inclusive and ongoing dialogues about what students should know and be able to do (and how well).
- Maintain the habit of rigorous inquiry and ongoing analysis of data.
- Provide time for and maintain norms of collaboration.
- Maintain a collective norm of internal accountability.
- Be responsible and flexible in allocating resources to identified needs.
- Maintain the habit of adjusting practice in the interest of greater quality and coherence.

Source: Jamentz, K. 1998. *Standards: From Document to Dialogue*, WestEd, 11. Adapted with permission from WestEd.

Under a standards-based system, there is community consensus for rigorous standards; parents and students know what the students are expected to learn and what exemplary performance looks like. Teachers vary the methods used to teach the curriculum. Ongoing, periodic assessment informs student performance, identifies students in need of additional intervention, and drives an ongoing professional development program.

Imagine a school where students come ready to learn, where community partners aggressively and willingly support the efforts of schools, and where parents work as a team with the classroom teacher to empower their children to meet grade-level standards. Imagine a district whose budgeting methods support schools by providing the necessary materials, equipment, and teaching and learning resources and in which policies are aligned at the district level to support each system component. A standards-based system has just that power!

Selected References and Further Reading

California Department of Education. 1992. *It's Elementary! Elementary Grades Task Force Report.* Sacramento: California Department of Education.

California Department of Education. 1999. *First Class: A Guide for Early Primary Education, Preschool–Kindergarten–First Grade.* Sacramento: California Department of Education.

Jamentz, K. 1998. *Standards: From Document to Dialogue*. San Francisco: WestEd.

Chapter 2

System Component I. Rigorous Academic Content and Performance Standards

Chapter 2

System Component I.
Rigorous Academic Content
and Performance Standards

The essential principles governing the implementation of a standards-based system are well documented. First, teachers, administrators, parents, and school communities need to adopt academic content standards that describe what students should know, understand, and be able to do at various points of their educational careers. Second, performance standards and assessment tools must be designed to measure how well students are achieving the agreed-on standards. Finally, the results of the assessments need to be used continuously to modify and target sufficient resources to ensure that all students meet the standards.

California adopted English–language arts and mathematics content standards in 1997 and 1998, respectively. In 1999 the State Board of Education also adopted state content standards in history–social science and science.

For a school district implementing standards-based education, the initial step is to adopt a set of academic content standards that are at least as rigorous as those adopted by the State Board of Education. The content standards need to describe what all students should know in key subject areas and be able to do as they complete each grade. Standards should set clear expectations for student achievement, provide a basis to hold educators and students accountable, and promote educational equity by demanding that all students achieve at high levels (Cross and Joftus 1997).

Content standards should also be designed to assist teachers in providing better classroom activities and instruction. To do this, the standards must be:

- Specific enough to provide a vision of expectations relative to a curriculum (e.g., the student can apply lessons learned from and make extensions of a text and evaluate texts critically)
- Aligned with performance standards; assessments; and principles of learning, curriculum, and instruction
- Clear and understandable to teachers, students, and parents
- Assessable in a variety of ways
- Illustrated by examples of student work
- Useful for defining and supporting good instruction (Hansche 1998, 13)

The standards-based reform movement has motivated national, state, and local curricular area experts and professional organizations to define the essential elements of their disciplines and delineate key concepts that can be used to guide teachers. Incorporating the essential elements and key concepts from all of the disciplines constituting the elementary core curriculum, however, may result in a very large and disconnected matrix of content skills unless teachers can integrate at least some of their lessons using standards from more than one subject area. Integrating the curriculum allows teachers to use an organizing theme to encourage their students to explore, interpret, and engage in learning activities that draw on standards from many subject matter disciplines. For example, during an integrated study of bicycles as a means of transportation, students can engage in research and write reports, measure things, increase their vocabularies, and conduct scientific tests of speed and stopping distance. Teachers designing such integrated learning activities, however, must ensure that each subject is presented with adequate depth and that there is ample time to cover the standard; for example, having students illustrate their own reports does not necessarily mean that the students are achieving arts standards.

While *content* standards provide teachers with a broad framework to assist them with focusing on what is most important for students to learn, *performance* standards and accompanying assessment tools should be designed to provide the necessary feedback to determine how well their students are meeting the content standards. Because different audiences will use performance standards for different purposes, school districts should include various stakeholders in designing and adopting their standards and in developing a supportive infrastructure. Educators and others with expertise in educating students with special needs (i.e., high achievers, students with disabilities, highly mobile students, economically disadvantaged students, and English learners) must be involved in this process.

Selected References and Further Reading

Cross, C. T., and S. Joftus. 1997. "Q: Do Public Schools Need State-Mandated Educational Standards? Yes: Standards Spur Student Achievement and Hold Educators Accountable for Public Monies," *Insight*, Vol. 13, No. 6, 24, 26–27.

Hansche, L. N. 1998. *Meeting the Requirements of Title I: Handbook for the Development of Performance Standards.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education and the Council of Chief State School Officers.

Recommendation 1:

Create a Standards-Based Learning Environment.

Standards should be used to set a very high foundation requirement for all students, reflecting high expectations for everyone. . . . our view implies that a standard is not a cut point on a curve but rather a clear target for everyone to shoot at, a target that almost all students can achieve if they work hard and long enough.

—Marc Tucker and Judy Codding
Standards for Our Schools

Rationale

In a standards-based system, the focus of the entire school community is directed toward how successful students are in achieving the standards adopted by the district. Every school must establish a learning environment that engages both its students and teachers in a challenging program for learning. Some educators believe that this overarching emphasis on student results needs to be carefully considered by persons implementing standards-based reform. Darling-Hammond and Falk (1997, 191) caution that "depending on how standards are shaped and used, either they could support more ambitious teaching and greater levels of success for all students, or they could serve to create higher rates of failure for those who are already least well-served by the education system."

Standards, by themselves, will not produce results. A learning environment that actively engages both students and teachers in a challenging program that leads to academic success is crucial. What would this successful learning environment look like?

> It would have to have clear performance standards, set at attainably high levels, and assessments to match. But it would also have to have powerful curriculum materials and instructional techniques available to the teachers that are explicitly designed to get all kinds of students to the standards. It would need instructional technology to support that curriculum. The system would have to provide reliable, continuous feedback to teachers on student performance against the standards so that the teachers could change course quickly if students are not making good progress. (Tucker and Codding 1998, 22)

Establishing a learning environment in which all students can succeed at high levels may require a change in the basic school culture. Such an environment should include the following:

- A belief that all students can achieve high standards even though they may enter the school with different strengths, weaknesses, and life experiences
- Opportunities for all students to engage in a rigorous curriculum
- A physically and emotionally safe learning environment that supports academic risk-taking, invites student participation, and structures cooperative learning experiences

- Excellent facilities, including a well-supplied and well-staffed school library, technological resources, and instructional materials that are accessible by all students
- The support of a site administrator who acts as an instructional leader as well as a site manager
- A system that encourages parents to assist their children in achieving grade-level standards
- Professional development that includes mentoring and coaching and continuously improves educators' knowledge about students' development, subject matter, and research-based instructional strategies

Finally, creating this learning environment may also necessitate changes in the attitudes of some of the school's personnel, parents, and community members. For example, implementing a standards-based learning environment requires the conviction that *all* students can meet high academic standards as opposed to only *certain* students. Likewise, meaningful teamwork and the regular collection and analysis of performance data by teachers are crucial to students' success (Schmoker 1996).

An Example of Best Practice

When the Eagle District adopted the state standards for language arts, mathematics, science, and history–social science, the education community worked together to change its way of doing business. Administrators, teachers, parents, and community members discussed instructional implications for individual standards. Teachers from each grade level met to plan lessons and projects that would result in students' achieving particular standards. The teachers also met with parents at the beginning of the school year to discuss grade-level standards and how they would communicate with parents on students' progress. A survey of families and staff was conducted and the responses were analyzed. As a result, a series of professional development and parent education sessions was designed and administered by local college professors and other experts. District staff planned how to evaluate the effectiveness of new efforts on children's achievement.

The third-grade teachers decided that, given their students' achievement levels, they would regroup their students for reading instruction from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. each day. In one classroom that has been reconstituted for this language arts program, some students who are reading below grade level are temporarily grouped for an intensive phonics lesson. Another group interacts with an adult volunteer and will participate in a teacher-directed writing lesson to develop skills with complex word families. A third group of students reads and discusses a story that emphasizes vocabulary development for English learners. This use of flexible grouping allows each child in the class to read with the teacher and to practice his or her new skills by reading silently.

Returning to their regular classrooms, the children read and interact with a different peer group and their regular teacher. During a science lesson, the children read background material in preparation for doing an experiment. After the experiment is completed and discussed, the students write about what they learned.

After school, at a regularly scheduled grade-level meeting, all of the third-grade teachers score the science writing tasks to evaluate the students' progress in technical writing

and ability to read for information. The results are used to redesignate groupings, a practice that is done periodically to reflect student learning patterns and growth relative to grade-level performance standards. The teachers also discuss problems that they are having with the curriculum and how they may better meet the learning needs of their students, especially their at-risk students. The teachers share successful strategies and materials and solicit help from their colleagues. Since few of the teachers are science majors, each volunteers to develop a lesson to be shared by all. The lesson addresses grade-level standards; includes references and concepts for the teachers' knowledge base; lists books and videos; suggests additional activities for students having difficulty; identifies assessment procedures; and describes a culminating project in which the students actively demonstrate their new knowledge.

The teachers collect examples of some of the students' work for their portfolios and audiotape some of the students' reading samples. These will be compared with the district performance standards to determine whether children are making progress. Each teacher participates in a subject-area assessment team, hosted by the district, that disaggregates performance data and reaches conclusions about student achievement levels. District reports are shared with the public at board meetings, on the district's Web site, in newspapers, and in telephone and e-mail messages that are recorded in various languages.

Through staff discussion the teachers become more knowledgeable about all the third-grade students at the school, not just those assigned to their classrooms. Consequently, each child benefits from the expertise of all grade-level teachers, and the teachers assume responsibility for the success of all the third-grade students. There is no blame, and there are no excuses; there is only focused commitment and accountability.

Steps Along the Way

Each of the steps listed below identifies actions that schools can take to create a standards-based environment.

- Implement professional development opportunities to provide a clear understanding of the rigorous work that students are being asked to do and of the strategies to achieve standards.
- Identify researched-based strategies and programs for meeting the academic needs of all students.
- Encourage professional collaboration and teacher-led research on effective instructional methods that enable all students to meet academic content standards.
- Provide ongoing learning opportunities to encourage parents to support and assist their children in achieving grade-level standards.

Shared Responsibilities

The following stakeholders share these responsibilities toward ensuring the implementation of Recommendation 1:

- The superintendent and district staff seek partnerships with community agencies to provide parent education, to strengthen facilities and resources, and to ensure a physically safe learning environment.
- The business community works in partnership with educators to emphasize the importance of students' achieving high standards. Businesses encourage student perseverance by providing examples from their own workforce.

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Web Sites

The California Department of Education Web site provides the locations of California's content standards, frameworks, and performance indicators. <http://www.cde.ca.gov>

A Putnam Valley, New York, Web site has links to states' standards, professional organizations, and clearinghouses devoted to standards. <http://PutnamValleySchools.org/standards.html>

Recommendation 2:

Adopt Performance Standards That Specify, How Good Is Good Enough?

While high expectations are certainly an important part of successful academic achievement strategies, expectations alone are insufficient.

—Douglas B. Reeves
Making Standards Work

Rationale

Academic content standards specify what students should know and be able to do. Standards are most valuable, however, when they are measurable and when they provide information to improve student achievement. To do this, districts must adopt performance standards that specify, How good is good enough? to gauge the degree to which each content standard is being attained.

Performance standards may be described in several ways. To many educators, they represent what a student knows by using a *level of proficiency*—depicting how well a student is generally performing in a content area (e.g., the student's work is judged to be at the advanced, proficient, basic, or below basic level). Teachers often use scoring rubrics to provide a common frame of reference for determining levels of proficiency. Scoring rubrics indicate the specific criteria by which a student's work will be evaluated. They describe the characteristics of this work, from work that barely shows evidence of meeting the standard to work that exceeds the standard. The designers of scoring rubrics must reach consensus regarding the kinds of performance that will be used to judge whether a particular proficiency level has been achieved. Once agreed on, most teachers can use a scoring rubric to assess their students' work with little variation from their other colleagues' ratings (California Department of Education 1998, 37). Figure 2-1 is an example of a scoring rubric that is used to determine fourth-grade students' proficiency in narrative content. The rubric was designed for districtwide use during the second or third trimester of fourth grade.

Figure 2-1
Narrative Content Rubric, Grade 4 Writing Assessment

Paper illustrates all or most of the following: BELOW 1	Paper illustrates all or most of the following: APPROACHING 2	Paper illustrates all or most of the following: PROFICIENT 3	Paper illustrates all or most of the following: ADVANCED 4
• Not on topic, or the topic is not clearly defined. Limited use of details.	• The topic is generally defined, but development is basic. Details are not always precise or relevant.	• The topic is defined, but development may be general. Details are clearly related to the topic.	• The topic is focused and well developed. Details are well-told and relevant.
• Lacks coherence, with no organizational structure evident.	• Attempts to group related details, but may only list ideas.	• Displays clear organization, with a definite beginning, middle, and end.	• Narrated coherently, displaying creativity and originality.
• Limited vocabulary	• Predictable vocabulary	• Effort to use precise and varied vocabulary	• Precise, interesting vocabulary is manipulated to convey message.
• No effort to vary sentence structure	• Some effort to vary beginnings of sentences, but expressive oral reading is monotonous.	• Varied sentence beginnings, and structures that attempt to invite expressive oral reading.	• Varied and purposeful sentences—and sentence lengths—that relate to and build on the one before. Has a rhythm to express when the piece is read aloud.
• Tone of the paper is indifferent, uninvolved, or lifeless.	• Tone of the paper is matter-of-fact and mechanical, with minimal context.	• Tone of the paper is sincere and easily followed, but does not completely engage the reader.	• Tone of the paper is engaging and compelling and develops the context to show an awareness of audience as well as the writer's own purpose.

Source: "Systems Alignment: Standards, Instruction, Assessment. Reporting, Accountability." 1999. Carmichael, Calif.: San Juan Unified School District. Adapted with permission from San Juan Unified School District.

After the students have read a story titled "The Day I Was a Hero," the teacher brainstorms with them about the different ways that people could be identified as heroes (e.g., helping someone new at school, kicking a soccer goal, teaching a brother to ride a two-wheeler, helping mother with a problem at home). Following this activity, the teacher asks the students to write a story titled "The Day I Was a Hero." The teacher directs the students, in writing their stories, to include details of their experiences and to remember to have a beginning, middle, and end to their stories. Examples of actual student work and the rubric score received are presented in Figure 2-2.

Figure 2-2

Samples of Student Work, Grade 4 Writing Assessment

Student A

4

Being A Hero

Being a hero is not easy. In the summer my mom and me and my sister went to Santa Cruz. We go every year when school is out in June. We get a motel across from the beach. One morning, we were walking on the beach when I heard a peeping cry. It cam from the beach. I walked over and saw a pretty blue bird laying in the sand. I think it had a broken wing. I picked it up and my mom scremed. She screms a lot. She said it had disese and I should not touch it. How could I leave the poor bird there? I pestered my mom until she got a box to put it in and we took it to the SPCA or something like that. They told us to take it somewhere else. My mom was getting tired of driving around but we got it to a place where they said they could take care of it. I really feel good about getting the bird help. I hope it lived. My mom and sister felt good too. My mom tells this story all the time and how I was a hero. It still feels good when I hear her tell the story. I really wanted to take the bird home but my mom would have none of that so being a hero was the second best thing. I hope you get to be a hero someday and feel as good as I did.

Student B

2

The Day I Was Hero

I was a hero in third grade.

I was a hero in third grade.

I was a hero in third grade because I was helping people and be nice to other people, friends and kinds.

I become a hero when I was in third grade.

I was helping my friends to do work and things like, math and problem solving.

I learn about that I was a hero. It was special because I was kind to other people.

It was important because it was so special to me.

Source: "Systems Alignment: Standards, Instruction, Assessment, Reporting, Accountability." 1999. Carmichael, Calif.: San Juan Unified School District. Reprinted with permission from San Juan Unified School District.

The teacher uses the scoring rubric presented in Figure 2-1 to assess the narrative content of the writing. In addition, a separate rubric was used to rate the narrative conventions (punctuation, spelling, grammar) of the story. Student A's story is rated a 4 on narrative content. The writing is clearly focused and well developed and captures the reader's attention; the organization displays creativity and originality; the vocabulary is precise and interesting and conveys the intended message; the sentence structure is varied; and the tone of the paper is engaging. Student B's story is rated a 2. The topic is defined, but its development is simple and basic; details are not always relevant and precise; there is an attempt to group ideas, but the story has no clear beginning, middle, and end; the vocabulary is predictable and simple.

Although most performance standards rely on some kind of scale or score to illustrate how well students are achieving designated content, the methods that educators use can be quite different. For example, some educators will use a *cut score* on a given assessment to help determine proficiency levels. Cut scores usually represent a point on a scale that separates one level of achievement from another.

Other educators might use *narrative descriptions* to identify the kind of work that students need to complete to achieve particular levels of proficiency. For example, third-grade students performing at the *proficient* level in reading should be able to demonstrate an overall understanding of an age-appropriate story by summarizing the story, drawing conclusions about the plot, and recognizing relationships among the characters.

In addition, some educators believe that, to be most beneficial, performance standards should be designed by using actual *examples of student work.* The work samples should clearly illustrate how well the work should be done so that any student can look at the samples and say, Ah, I understand now—I can do *that.* At the same time, teachers, should be able to look at the illustrations of student work and say, Now I understand what types of learning experiences to create (New Standards 1997, 4). Descriptors of student work should include examples from individuals representing the entire student population and range of performances. In addition, students need to see themselves reflected in the work samples if they are to believe that they too are capable of producing such work.

To develop useful performance standards, several standards-based researchers recommend that schools use more than one of the approaches mentioned above. This takes time and requires collaboration among teachers and other stakeholders; however, understanding what it means to *meet the standard* is often as important as achieving the standard itself (Jamentz 1998, 16). For example, group scoring brings educators together to arrive at consensus in scoring performance assessments. It causes group members to articulate their reasons for specific evaluations of student products: "Why isn't this paper a 3? Even a 4? It's the only one which shows some glimmering that there is more than one solution." (Mitchell 1996, 33) The discussion contributes greatly to *interrater reliability,* as educators scoring student work arrive at the same scores. The dialogue and consensus-building that take place among the professionals during their deliberations can often be as beneficial as the rubric or end product developed.

An Example of Best Practice

Sixth-graders at Sand Dunes Elementary School are just beginning their work on narrative accounts—one of the language arts' standards for writing content. The teacher, Mrs. Garcia, provides the class with the criteria for a good narrative account and asks the students to discuss what the criteria mean. After about 15 minutes of discussion, she distributes to each pair of students a narrative account from her previous year's class to serve as an exemplar. Mrs. Garcia has highlighted where the paper was well done and has briefly described how the written narrative has met the standard. Students talk to their partners as Mrs. Garcia asks them to point out various criteria, including developing reader interest and developing characters through a description of their gestures, movement, and expressions. As students begin their rough drafts, they constantly refer to the quality criteria and adjust or extend their stories. Students ask their table mates to critique what they are writing based on the criteria for a good narrative: Does this opening make you want to read my story? Did I describe this character enough so that you know why I included him? The students volunteer to read sections of their writing when they think they have an exemplar of the criteria. After a week of drafting, revising, and critiquing, the students begin work on their final drafts.

The next week, the sixth-grade teachers meet to critique all of their students' writing. The teachers indicate whether a paper meets the standard and comment on its merits, using large notes that are attached to the back of the work. The teachers also provide feedback to the student as to why the paper met or did not meet the standard. Collectively, the sixth-grade teachers quickly develop a picture of what a narrative account looks like when it meets the standard. It becomes obvious to the group that Mrs. Garcia's class has produced many exemplary papers, and her colleagues ask her to share some of the methods that she has used to help her students become such good writers.

The following morning, the papers are returned to the students, and the students revise them based on the scorers' commentaries. Most papers need nothing more than revisions, but a few students in each class need additional instruction. Mrs. Garcia has agreed to hold a writing clinic for an hour after school each Thursday for students who need additional help. There will also be opportunities to write narrative accounts during the remaining months of the school year, perhaps even in the context of other content areas, but the process will not be so formal. In May, students will have to write a narrative account as a part of the district proficiency test, and they will not receive help from their teachers or classmates.

Steps Along the Way

Each of the steps listed below identifies actions that can be taken to adopt performance standards that specify, How good is good enough?

- Teachers determine what students need to know and should be able to demonstrate at each grade level, using the academic content standards as a guide. Teachers work with other stakeholders to identify appropriate performance standards.

- Principals participate in discussions about student achievement and ensure that staff has sufficient time and opportunity to engage in meaningful planning and collaboration related to the development, implementation, and refinement of performance standards.
- Students are taught to assess their own work regularly, using the performance descriptors, samples of student work, and teacher commentary contained in the performance standards.
- Teachers use the results of assessing student progress toward meeting standards to modify their curriculum and instruction and to design appropriate accommodations for students needing assistance in meeting the standards.

Shared Responsibilities

The following stakeholders share these responsibilities toward ensuring the implementation of Recommendation 2:

- The district engages in meaningful and timely collaboration with parents and other community members to ensure that all stakeholders understand the importance of performance standards and their opportunities to make a contribution to the process.
- The district superintendent and district staff periodically review the performance standards that schools use to determine whether the performance levels should be modified.
- The district provides resources (e.g., curriculum, instructional materials, and professional development) to schools to support their successful implementation of standards-based education.

Selected References and Further Reading

California Department of Education. 1998. *Guide and Criteria for Program Quality Review: Elementary Grades.* Sacramento: California Department of Education.

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New Standards. 1997. *Performance Standards: English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Applied Learning.* Vol. 1. National Center on Education and the Economy and the University of Pittsburgh.

Chapter 3

System Component II. Assessment and Accountability

Chapter 3

System Component II.
Assessment and Accountability

Assessment is an essential part of good instruction. In a standards-based system, assessment results are used to:

- Identify students' progress toward achieving standards.
- Identify students who need additional instruction or interventions.
- Prescribe a reteaching or intervention focus for individual students.
- Identify professional development needs for individual teachers, schools, and districts.
- Provide information that helps target school and district resources to areas of need.

The California Department of Education's *Reading/Language Arts Framework* and the *Mathematics Framework* discuss three types of assessments:

- *Entry-level assessments* determine whether students already know some of the material to be taught and whether they have the necessary prerequisite skills.
- *Monitoring-of-progress assessments* are administered on an ongoing basis to assess the attainment of particular standards.
- *Summative assessments,* such as the *Stanford Achievement Test, Ninth Edition* (Stanford 9) and end-of-year tests, assess whether students have achieved the goals defined by a group of standards.

Accountability systems provide the means for determining whether schools are making adequate progress. Through the Public Schools Accountability Act of 1999 (PSAA) and the high school exit examination, the state is holding districts and schools accountable for student achievement. The PSAA consists of three main components:

- The Academic Performance Index (API)
- An interventions program to assist underperforming schools (the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program [II/USP])
- An awards program to recognize effective and improving schools

The API provides a composite score for each school based on its academic achievement and other indicators. The API will

include nonacademic measures—such as pupil attendance rates, graduation rates, and other valid and reliable measures—when they become available. The PSAA emphasizes growth and improvement. Schools are expected to meet annual growth targets as well as growth targets for *numerically significant subgroups*. (As defined for the API, the term *numerically significant subgroups* refers to ethnic and socioeconomically disadvantaged subgroups of students that comprise [1] at least 30 pupils and 15 percent of a school's total student population; or [2] at least 100 pupils.) The reporting of data by subgroups forces educators to address achievement gaps.

Beginning with the class of 2004, each student will be required to pass the high school exit examination to receive a diploma. It is the responsibility of elementary schools to provide remedial instruction for students with low Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) scores so they will be on track for success at the high-school level.

Districts should develop a district-level accountability system that integrates state and local accountability measures to provide useful data to improve academic performance. When integrated with the state accountability system, local accountability systems using multiple measures can create a rich source of information and data. Specifically, local accountability systems:

- Can help educators know the extent to which students are meeting standards in each subject area.
- Enable educators to track individual student performance over time.
- Can provide information on the achievement of district grade-level goals and standards (Warren 1999).

Information integrated from the state and local accountability systems should be communicated to parents, business partners, and community members in an easy-to-read format and used to target areas for improvement.

Selected Reference and Further Reading

Warren, P. 1999. "Implementing California's New Accountability System," *California Curriculum News Report*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 1–2.

Web Site

The Public Schools Accountability Act Web site contains information on the Academic Performance Index and the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program. <http://www.cde.ca.gov/psaa>

Recommendation 3:

Require That Ongoing Assessment and Analysis of Student Work Drive the Curriculum.

Assessments play a pivotal role in standards-led reform, by:

- *Communicating the goals that school systems, schools, teachers, and students are expected to achieve;*
- *Providing targets for teaching and learning; and*
- *Shaping the performance of educators and students.*

—Robert L. Linn and Joan L. Herman
Standards-Led Assessment

Rationale

In a standards-based system, frequent analysis of student work drives the curriculum, including the scope and sequence of grade-level content, instructional strategies, materials, resources, and student groupings. The power of using students' daily work as a diagnostic tool is revealed when teachers look at student work and discuss the corresponding standards or performance expectations very explicitly. "Where teachers do this, changes in teaching and schooling practices almost invariably occur—especially for those students who have been less successful at schoolwork" (Darling-Hammond 1997, 237).

To assess whether specific standards need to be taught to students, information from standards-based report cards and specially designed entry-level assessments can be used. Kindergarten teachers can collect information through developmental profiles received from state-subsidized child development programs or federally funded Head Start programs.

When preparing standards-based assessments, teachers need to identify the primary standards that the task will assess and the complementary standards in other areas that will also be assessed. For example, although the primary standards may relate to science, completion of the task may include the use of mathematics and writing standards.

Standards-based assessment is most powerful when district staff (teachers and curriculum and assessment specialists) work together to determine what standards should be assessed and develop common rubrics for assessment. Teachers need to be trained to ensure reliability and consistency in the scoring of locally developed measures.

Educators should assess English learners' progress both in English-language development (ELD) and in achieving grade-level standards. Assessment methods should be aligned with instructional practices. For example, assessments should be conducted in the primary language of students receiving alternative, bilingual instruction. Additionally, various accommodations can be made, such as using bilingual dictionaries

and giving students extra time to complete the task. English learners should be assessed regularly to monitor their progress through the proficiency levels outlined in the state-adopted ELD standards.

The impact of assessment is further enhanced when data are disaggregated to evaluate the performance of specific groups of students. Disaggregation of data is the practice of grouping student scores relative to predetermined characteristics, such as gender, ethnicity, second-language status, and number of years in the school or district. (See the *Guide and Criteria for Program Quality Review: Elementary Grades,* published by the California Department of Education, under this Recommendation's "Selected References and Further Reading" section, for a description of how to disaggregate data.) By using disaggregated data, schools can compare students' performances in various categories, such as participants in Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), English learners, gifted students, and special education students. Analyses of disaggregated data help educators identify patterns of underachievement and make necessary changes in the curriculum and instructional strategies so that all children can achieve standards. Disaggregation by grade level allows teachers and principals to analyze the design and implementation of grade-level curriculum—including the quality of teaching resources, such as textbooks and technology—and the need for grade-specific professional development. By further disaggregating data by classroom, school personnel can identify teachers who may need additional support as well as successful teachers who may serve as mentors to colleagues.

An Example of Best Practice

The Pineridge District developed district standards that have been aligned to state standards in reading, mathematics, science, and history–social studies. The district spent two years developing districtwide assessments that are aligned with the standards in reading and mathematics. Teachers were trained to score assessments to ensure that teachers at each grade level judged student work in a consistent manner.

To determine whether each student has met the district's standards, the district uses the following multiple assessments: the Stanford Achievement Test, district assessments, ongoing teacher evaluations, and portfolios. Students' performances in reading and mathematics are assessed frequently at each grade level. Examples of assessments in language arts include oral fluency passages, comprehension/literacy analysis adapted from textbook materials, and assessment of students' speaking and listening skills using a rubric designed for their grade level. District assessments are being developed in science and history–social science.

Students develop self-assessment skills by using designated rubrics to evaluate their own work. In writing, students assess their own work before submitting it to a classmate for peer editing. After receiving peer review, students revise their work for accuracy, clarity, and specificity.

In mathematics, the district's assessment requires the analysis of data and communication of the results. Additional assessments include textbook diagnostic tests, timed math facts, and graphing and scaling projects.

Through the use of these multiple measures, student achievement is reported on standards-based report cards. These report cards keep students, teachers, and parents focused on achieving the standards.

Assessment results are reviewed in grade-level meetings to identify students who need additional help. Results are disaggregated to determine whether English learners and other subgroups are progressing adequately. Teachers discuss areas that need remediation and methods for improving instruction.

Steps Along the Way

Each of the steps listed below identifies actions that can be taken so that ongoing assessment and analysis of student work drive the curriculum:

- Schools establish portfolio systems that collect student work and show growth toward grade-level standards over time. Portfolios in language arts would include a range of measures, such as running records, paper and pencil tests of specific skills, writing samples, and responses to literature. Summary sheets describing these portfolios follow students as they move from grade level to grade level.
- Schools disaggregate data for their major programs and subgroups of students.

Shared Responsibilities

The following stakeholders share these responsibilities toward ensuring the implementation of Recommendation 3:

- Schools and districts design and select assessment tools that are developmentally appropriate and free of cultural bias. Districts also determine that assessment tools have validity in that they measure the standard or standards they were intended to assess.
- Institutions of higher education prepare teachers to have a broad background in assessment techniques.

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California Department of Education. 1998. *Guide and Criteria for Program Quality Review: Elementary Grades.* Sacramento: California Department of Education.

Darling-Hammond, L. 1997. *The Right to Learn: A Blueprint for Creating Schools That Work.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

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Schmoker, M. 1996. *Results: The Key to Continuous School Improvement.* Alexandria, Va.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Stiggins, R. J. 1997. *Student-Centered Classroom Assessment* (Second edition). Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Merrill.

Web Site

New Standards Project performance standards and rubrics are available through the National Center for Education and the Economy Web site. <http://www.ncee.org/ourproducts/perfStandards.html>

Recommendation 4:

Communicate Performance Expectations and Results.

Scoring guides not only help the teacher evaluate student work but, properly written, they also help the student know how to achieve and exceed the performance standard.

—Douglas B. Reeves
Making Standards Work

Rationale

In a standards-based system, schools and districts communicate standards-based performance expectations and results to teachers, students, parents, and the community. Teachers can clearly explain the expectations for the year to students and parents.

Students and parents should know what is expected for proficient work and how students can improve their work to make it proficient. Students also need opportunities for self-assessment, such as using rubrics to assess their writing assignments and science and history–social science projects. These opportunities cause students to be more reflective about their own work.

Standards-based report cards (see Figure 3-1) provide a systematic way to report students' progress toward standards. Rather than assigning letter grades to general content areas, such as reading, standards-based report cards record students' levels of proficiency in achieving identified grade-level standards or clusters of standards. In addition to reporting attainment of standards, these report cards may also contain information on students' efforts and growth. The use of standards-based report cards helps establish more consistent grading practices across teachers.

Figure 3-1
A Fourth-Grade Standards-Based Report Card

School Year _____ / _____

Student _____ Grade _____

School _____ Teacher _____

Explanation of Markings

Standards Levels:

1	2	3	4
Below the grade level standard	**Approaching** the grade level standard	**Proficient** at the grade level standard	**Advanced**

Note: Key indicators (*) marked with a "+" or "–" indicate a different performance level than the overall standard. ☑ = not addressed

Attendance	1st	2nd	3rd
Days Tardy			
Days Absent			

Your child is assigned to the _____ grade for the _____/_____ school year.

Principal _____

Check if applicable	1st	2nd	3rd	Check if applicable	1st	2nd	3rd
Speech/Language*				English Language Learner*			
Resource Program*				Title I			
Special Day Class*				Other			

*See IEP or ELL Progress Reports

Standards: LANGUAGE ARTS	1st	2nd	3rd
Standard 1: *Reading-Decoding*	❑	❑	❑
• Word Analysis and Word Recognition	—	—	—
• Vocabulary Development	—	—	—
• Fluency	—	—	—
Standards 2 & 3: *Reading-Comprehension/Literary Response*	❑	❑	❑
• Comprehension of Grade Level Text	—	—	—
• Response to and Analysis of Literature	—	—	—
Standards 4 & 5: *Writing-Process/Application*	❑	❑	❑
• Planning/Pre-write/Draft	—	—	—
• Revising	—	—	—
• Completed Product (Content and Organization)	—	—	—
• Research Strategies/Skills	—	—	—
Standard 6: *Writing-Conventions*	❑	❑	❑
• Punctuation, Capitalization, Sentence Structure, and Grammar	—	—	—
• Editing	—	—	—
• Spelling	—	—	—
• Penmanship	—	—	—
Standard 7: *Speaking*	❑	❑	❑
Standard 8: *Listening*	❑	❑	❑

Standards: MATHEMATICS	1st	2nd	3rd
Standard 1: *Number Sense and Operations*	❑	❑	❑
• Identify place value and compare whole numbers	—	—	—
• Identify, order, and compare decimals	—	—	—
• Find the sum or difference of whole numbers and decimals	—	—	—
• Multiply a multidigit number by a two-digit number	—	—	—
• Divide a multidigit number by a one-digit number	—	—	—
• Identify and write fractions	—	—	—
Standard 2: *Algebraic Concepts–Patterns, Relationships, and Equations*	❑	❑	❑
• Solve mathematical expressions	—	—	—
• Understand factoring and prime numbers	—	—	—
Standard 3: *Geometry and Measurement*	❑	❑	❑
• Measure the perimeter and area of rectangles	—	—	—
• Identify, describe, and compare geometric figures	—	—	—
Standard 4: *Making Sense of Data*	❑	❑	❑
• Represent data with graphs, tally charts, or tables	—	—	—
• Read, interpret, and analyze data in graphs, charts, or tables	—	—	—
• Understand statistical concepts related to data	—	—	—
Standard 5: *Reasoning, Problem Solving, and Communicating*	❑	❑	❑
• Analyze problems	—	—	—
• Use appropriate strategies to solve problems	—	—	—
• Explain thinking using mathematical terminology	—	—	—
• Predict, verify, and determine reasonableness of solutions	—	—	—

1st Trimester Comments:

Parent Signature: _____

2nd Trimester Comments:

Parent Signature: _____

(Continued on page 30)

Figure 3-1 *(Continued)*

A Fourth-Grade Standards-Based Report Card

Explanation of Markings Classroom Efforts, Social Skills, and Work Habit Descriptors:			
"N" Needs Improvement	"S" Satisfactory	"G" Good	"O" Outstanding

Effort	1st	2nd	3rd
Reading:			
Decoding	❑	❑	❑
Comprehension	❑	❑	❑
Writing:			
Content	❑	❑	❑
Conventions	❑	❑	❑
Mathematics:			
Computation	❑	❑	❑
Reasoning	❑	❑	❑
*Science	❑	❑	❑
*Social Studies	❑	❑	❑
*Music	❑	❑	❑
*Art	❑	❑	❑
*P.E.	❑	❑	❑

*See *insert for the key indicators for these subject areas.*

Social Skills and Work Habits	1st	2nd	3rd
Follows classroom rules and directions	❑	❑	❑
Follows playground rules and directions	❑	❑	❑
Works, shares, and plays with others cooperatively	❑	❑	❑
Uses time appropriately	❑	❑	❑
Works independently	❑	❑	❑
Respects rights and property of others	❑	❑	❑
Completes classwork on time	❑	❑	❑
Completes homework on time	❑	❑	❑

3rd Trimester Comments:

Source: "Systems Alignment: Standards, Instruction, Assessment, Reporting, Accountability." 1999. Carmichael, Calif.: San Juan Unified School District. Adapted with permission from San Juan Unified School District.

An Example of Best Practice

At the beginning of the year, all parents at Starfish Elementary School receive the grade-level standards that their children will be expected to meet. The standards and a selected rubric are discussed at back-to-school night and at the first parent-teacher conference.

Teachers assess student progress on standards by using selected tasks that are integrated into classroom assignments. Students use a rubric to rate their own efforts and receive feedback from their teachers about their progress toward meeting the standards. Using both self-evaluation and teacher feedback, students make revisions to meet the standards. At home, parents actively assist their children with homework. By giving parents and students rubrics to judge student performance, both parents and students know what the task calls for and what exemplary work looks like.

Teachers use the district's standards-based report cards to rate each student's work relative to grade-level standards. These report cards are reviewed with parents to describe their child's achievement and to set future goals and benchmarks. At a parent-student-teacher conference, the teacher and student show writing samples, videotapes of oral presentations, reports of science experiments, and other classroom assessments that demonstrate the levels noted in the written report card. Scores from standardized tests and the teacher's systematic observations are also reviewed and discussed.

A staff person or community volunteer is present, when needed, to translate for parents of English learners. Parents, the student, and the teacher leave the conference knowing where the student performs relative to grade-level expectations and where efforts for improvement will be focused during the next quarter.

Steps Along the Way

Each of the steps listed below identifies actions that can be taken to communicate performance expectations and results:

- Schools develop scoring rubrics that clearly describe performance expectations and are understood by students and parents.
- Schools develop standards-based report cards to provide information on the achievement of grade-level standards in major curricular areas.
- Students lead parent-student-teacher conferences in which they discuss their progress, identify their own areas of need, and establish goals for themselves.
- Students use rubrics and teacher feedback to evaluate their own work and set performance improvement goals.
- Teachers need to assess periodically children's physical, social, and emotional development.

Shared Responsibilities

The following stakeholders share these responsibilities toward ensuring the implementation of Recommendation 4:

- The district examines disaggregated data from multiple measures, looks for patterns of achievement and underachievement, and works with schools to provide the necessary resources to improve instruction and student performance.
- The school site council uses results from accountability measures to evaluate the effectiveness of the school program and to set annual goals for improvement.
- California Department of Education (CDE) staff disseminates information on best practices.

Selected References and Further Reading

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Web Site

The San Diego County Office of Education Web site has sample standards-based report cards, including a report card for the assessment of English-language development standards and a description of the process for developing the report card samples. <http://www.sdcoe.k12.ca.us/iss/assess/reptcard>

Recommendation 5:

Hold Stakeholders Accountable for Their Part in Students' Achievement of Standards.

Without accountability and without comprehensive and meaningful assessments, the standards movement contains little more than platitudes.

—Douglas B. Reeves
Making Standards Work

Rationale

A standards-based system will work best when educational stakeholders (state policymakers, administrators, teachers, and students) recognize and accept their responsibility for improving student achievement.

In his study of successful, high-poverty schools, Johnson (1999) found that everyone who was involved with a child had an important role in improving the child's achievement. The talents of all teachers, support staff, administrators, volunteers, parents, and students were marshaled to support student achievement.

In addition, successful districts encourage parents and the community to expect more from their students and from their schools. One method of raising expectations and keeping parents and the community informed is a "state of the school" address, which discusses the status of student performance on state and local accountability measures and outlines future goals and achievement targets. With parents and the community, educators also need to celebrate the improvements that they have made.

Although teachers must continue to facilitate the active engagement of students in the curriculum, students have an increasing responsibility for their own achievement of standards, particularly as they progress through the grades. Students who have a clear understanding of the expectations and the ability to assess their own skills are more likely to assume responsibility for their own learning. It is the same kind of responsibility that students often demonstrate in sports or games during which they set a target and pursue it until it is achieved.

Although parents are not held accountable for the achievement of standards, they do have a shared responsibility for their child's achievement. Parent-school compacts are a good method for defining the responsibilities of home and school. Many successful, high-poverty schools have created structures that helped parents to learn the standards that students were expected to achieve, to understand the efforts the school was making, and to help their own children learn the standards (Johnson 1999).

An Example of Best Practice

Agate School staff, parents, and community members reviewed the performance of students on state and local accountability measures and discovered that, while achievement in mathematics had increased, a large percentage of students were not meeting the science standards. Teachers indicated that they had emphasized reading and mathematics, and they realized that science had been given less attention. Parents and community members indicated that they valued science education and wanted it improved. It was decided that teachers would initially meet in grade-level clusters to review the science standards and the curriculum units they were using. Teachers were identified in each grade level to receive district-funded staff development in science teaching and to work within grade-level clusters to improve science curriculum units. Business and community partners worked with the staff to upgrade science equipment and to provide guest speakers from the business community to discuss the role of science in their work. After one year the efforts were evaluated and fine-tuned, based on student assessment data and student and teacher feedback.

Steps Along the Way

Each of the steps listed below identifies actions that can be taken to hold stakeholders accountable for their part in students' achievement of standards:

- Schools create clear and accurate methods to explain to students, parents, and the community the results from state and local accountability systems.
- Students take increasing responsibility for establishing learning goals and meeting them.
- Principals create schoolwide profiles of students' achievements and communicate both expectations and results to the school's community and partners.

Everyone Is Accountable in a Standards-Based System

In a system of shared accountability, *states* would be responsible for providing sufficient resources, for assuring an adequate supply of well-qualified personnel, and for adopting standards for student learning. *School districts* would be responsible for distributing school resources equitably, hiring and supporting well-qualified teachers and administrators (and removing those who are not competent), and supporting high-quality teaching and learning. *Schools* would be accountable for creating a productive environment for learning, assessing the effectiveness of teaching practice, and helping staff and parents communicate with and learn from one another. *Teachers and other staff* would be accountable for identifying and meeting the needs of individual students and for meeting professional standards of subject matter teaching. Together with colleagues, they would continually assess and revise their strategies to better meet the needs of students.

Source: Darling-Hammond, L. 1997. *The Right to Learn: A Blueprint for Creating Schools That Work.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 248. Reprinted with permission from Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Shared Responsibilities

The following stakeholders share these responsibilities toward ensuring the implementation of Recommendation 5:

- District staff, school administrators, school site councils, and teachers review the achievement of standards in each subject area to determine areas that need improvement.
- Districts and schools analyze disaggregated data to determine if all student groups are making gains.
- The media are partners with schools and districts in promoting student achievement by publicizing successful actions and future goals.

Selected References and Further Reading

Achieving Results: Standards, Accountability, and Student Learning. 1998. Hayward: California School Leadership Academy.

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Chapter 4

System Component III. Curriculum and Instruction

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Curriculum and Instruction

In a standards-based system, good curriculum design and implementation focus not only on teaching the standards but also on providing the best resources and opportunities for students to apply their knowledge, procedures, and skills across subject areas. Curriculum—content, teaching strategies, and instructional materials and resources, including technology—determines what teachers teach and how they actively engage students in learning. The achievement of standards is based, in large measure, on the skill of teachers to organize and implement curriculum.

Curriculum design is a circular process: grade-level academic standards are identified, curriculum is designed to enable students to achieve the standards, instructional materials are aligned to standards, student achievement—the success of the curriculum—is assessed, curriculum is revised, additional curriculum is designed based on the results of the assessment, the resulting achievement is assessed, more curriculum is designed, and so on in a continuous cycle. Accordingly, standards, assessment, and curriculum organization must be in close alignment.

Although teachers often have a great deal of discretion in selecting appropriate curriculum, in a standards-based system those decisions should be influenced by the specific standards and needs of their students, including other district-required curricular areas (e.g., visual and performing arts, physical education, character education, school-to-career, health, English-language development, technology, and service learning). The learning styles of individual students as well as research on appropriate instructional strategies related to student age, gender, language, ethnicity, and culture should also be considered when selecting and implementing appropriate curriculum.

California's standards-based system requires that each child meets rigorous academic standards, but how do educators ensure each child's success? Schools must have a system to immediately identify and provide interventions for students who are having difficulty meeting standards. By actively involving community partners,

including educators at feeder schools, educators expand the likelihood of children developing intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically. Effective teachers already know that teaching to standards requires the use of many effective approaches. In some circumstances direct instruction may be an effective strategy. In other circumstances investigation, discussion, drill, hands-on materials, individualized formats, and small- and large-group instruction have a place in a standards-based curriculum design.

The State Board of Education has approved a series of state curriculum frameworks that are aligned to grade-level standards. These frameworks offer educators assistance in selecting curricular approaches and strategies that—along with assessment practices, instructional materials, and classroom organization—support California's diverse classrooms and raise expectations for student achievement.

Recommendation 6:

Teach All Disciplines in the Curriculum While Emphasizing Reading, Writing, and Mathematics.

Curriculum *is an organized framework that delineates the content that children are to learn, the processes through which children achieve the identified curricular goals, what teachers do to help children achieve these goals, and the context in which teaching and learning occur.*

—Sue Bredekamp and Teresa Rosegrant
Reaching Potentials: Transforming Early Childhood Curriculum and Assessment

Rationale

Standards-based curriculum should emphasize reading, writing, and mathematics while supporting the academic rigor of all other core disciplines. "Every child a reader by grade three" and "every child prepared for algebra by grade eight" should not be thought of as just slogans; they must become statewide goals for educators.

Becoming competent in reading, writing, speaking, and listening is essential to academic, personal, social, and economic success. Individuals with the knowledge, skills, and disposition to use the power of the printed word are more likely to become independent learners, less likely to drop out of school, and more likely to be employed when they become adults (California Department of Education 1999c). For students to develop such competency, California's schools must develop a curriculum that is balanced—which means that the "overall emphasis accorded to a skill or standard is determined by its priority or importance relative to students' language and literacy levels and needs." The curriculum must also be comprehensive—meaning that "students learn to read and write, comprehend and compose, appreciate and analyze, and perform and enjoy" the subject area (California Department of Education 1999c, 4).

Achievement of standards at each grade level relies on the achievement of standards at the previous grade level. Consequently, the knowledge and skills acquired in the elementary grades become critical to the mastery of standards in middle schools and high schools. For example, mastering elementary grade mathematics, organized by grade-level standards, enables students to succeed at advanced mathematics, beginning with algebra for all students by grade eight. The mathematics curriculum presented to elementary students needs to teach a balance of basic skills, conceptual and procedural understanding, and mathematical reasoning (problem solving). Conceptual competence is knowing what to do; procedural competence is knowing how to do it; and mathematical reasoning is knowing where and when to use it. Basic computational and procedural skills are those skills that all students should learn to use routinely and automatically. Students should be able to practice these basic skills sufficiently and frequently enough to commit them to memory. They should be able to expand their abilities to solve problems through extensive experience at various

levels of difficulty and at every level in their mathematical development (California Department of Education 1999b).

Although the emphasis of standards-based reform is often on reading and mathematics, elementary teachers must be familiar with California's curriculum frameworks in history–social science, foreign language, health, physical education, science, and visual and performing arts. In addition to being important in their own right, these subject areas reinforce literacy and mathematics, provide a context for reading across all subject areas, and supply real situations for problem solving. Many students who struggle with reading or math may find success in learning activities in science, art, or physical education. For example, the arts can contribute to successful academic achievement by helping all students exercise their cognitive reasoning and judgment. "Art instruction that involves students in analyzing works of art, whether their own or others, requires functioning at the highest cognitive levels of mental activity" (Williams 1991).

Another way to help students to become more knowledgeable in all subject areas is to integrate the curriculum. Integration provides meaningful learning experiences so that students learn basic skills, facts, and concepts and subsequently apply them in related subject areas. Using an integrated curriculum allows students to see connections, apply skills in real-life situations, and become motivated. By focusing on various subject area standards, educators ensure that the integrated curriculum retains the rigor, breadth, and depth of coverage for each subject area (California Department of Education 1999a).

An Example of Best Practice

Students in a fifth-grade class at Havenwood Elementary School are studying U.S. history. They are asked to select a historical figure who represents this country's diverse history and prepare a report. Using primary and secondary resources, students read for information, use research skills, write, and incorporate various technologies. To understand their characters' historical contexts, students use the school library and Internet sites to connect the characters' lives to geographical and literary contexts and to corresponding world events or major scientific discoveries. Students create reports using language arts activities and skills, such as genre-specific writing, detailed descriptions, proper spelling and mechanics, and oral presentations. The final reports are assessed by both the student writers and the teacher, according to specific grade-level English–language arts and history content standards and a task-specific rubric. Students use their written reports to present formal oral reports to their classmates and students from other classrooms. Peers assess these oral presentations by using a performance rubric, thus applying their own listening skills. Although it requires time, the assignment enables students to meet multiple standards through meaningful learning activities.

Steps Along the Way

Each of the steps listed below identifies actions that schools can take to teach all disciplines in the curriculum while emphasizing reading, writing, and mathematics:

- Teach students to apply basic skills by challenging their thinking and reinforcing their knowledge through activities, such as thematic and project-based instruction—models that encourage meaningful thought and basic skills application across content areas while emphasizing reading, writing, and mathematics.
- Invest in quality professional development that gives in-depth subject matter knowledge to all staff.
- Develop and share exemplary lesson plans, use instructional materials that integrate content areas, and discuss specific standards in the lesson.

Shared Responsibilities

The following stakeholders share these responsibilities toward ensuring the implementation of Recommendation 6:

- Parents of young children are encouraged to engage in appropriate early reading and readiness activities, such as oral language development, familiarity with books and storytelling, and problem solving.
- Students read every day for knowledge and skill improvement. If reading materials are limited, the education community helps students to gain access to print outside the classroom (e.g., neighborhood libraries and the Internet).
- Families serve as models for their children by demonstrating their own uses of reading, writing, and mathematics.
- Institutions of higher education integrate standards-based learning in all teacher preparation programs and teach new teachers various instructional methods and strategies necessary to engage all students.
- Community agencies and organizations work together to promote education and family literacy in convenient locations (e.g., community members read to children at the shopping mall).

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Williams, H. M. 1991. "The Language of Civilization: The Vital Role of the Arts in Education." Address given before the President's Committee on the Humanities, New York City, New York.

Web Sites

According to its Web site, the Association for the Advancement of Arts Education is the "direct result of a comprehensive two-year study which surveyed hundreds of superintendents, principals, teachers, parents, school board members, artists, professional arts administrators and community leaders regarding their views on arts education. The study found a positive element for change in arts education priorities and programs." <http://www.aaae.org>

The Santa Clara County Office of Education has developed language arts and mathematics kits that list content standards for each grade level, identify applicable skills, describe teacher strategies and student tasks, and explain what specific methods best assess these standards. The kits may be ordered on the Web site. In addition, the Web site lists appropriate resources, including technology, for each standard for each grade level. <http://www.sccoe.k12.ca.us>

Recommendation 7:

Actively Involve All Students in the Inclusive Core Curriculum.

Each person's map of the world is as unique as the person's thumbprint. There are no two people alike. . . . So in dealing with people, you try not to fit them to your concept of what they should be.

—Milton Erickson

Rationale

Children of all ability levels and from all linguistic, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds have a right to be actively involved (engaged in the actual work that leads toward the achievement of grade-level standards) in the core curriculum. All students are capable of achieving high standards and should be encouraged and taught to do so. Research has shown that "poor students and students of color are much less likely to have teachers who have majored or even minored in the subjects they teach. And despite considerable gains in test scores in the 70s and 80s, African American and Latino students' scores on many measures have stagnated or fallen in the past 10 years" (Chenoweth 1998, 14). It is particularly important that elementary schools address these achievement gaps.

Schools that expect all students to reach high standards provide these students with qualified teachers, appropriate and challenging instructional materials, and immediate interventions. Traditionally underserved students—such as special education, gifted and talented, at-risk, homeless, migrant, or highly mobile students—benefit especially from active involvement with a rigorous curriculum. When this curriculum includes all children's exposure to high-quality instruction, challenging assignments, and high expectations for academic success, it is viewed as an inclusive core curriculum. Federal and state laws require students to have access to the core curriculum.

Research suggests that efforts to create effective classroom environments for children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds should be based, in part, on knowledge about the role that culture plays in shaping their learning opportunities and experiences at home. Cultural distinctions should not be confused with socioeconomic distinctions. In addition, educators are cautioned that culture should not be interpreted as a prescription for treating particular children in certain limited ways (Board on Children and Families and others 1994, 7).

A teacher's attitude, high expectations, and knowledge base are crucial to setting the educational goal of appreciation of diversity (Ramsey 1988). A challenge that teachers often face is one of appreciating differences in how children are accustomed to learning and of determining whether, when, and how to adjust to these differences. For example, should the teacher interpret a quiet child's behavior as an indication of withdrawal or as a culturally shaped means of showing respect? In terms of special-needs students, the classroom teacher must be especially purposeful in planning intervention

strategies and varying teaching methods for students experiencing difficulty (Wolery, Strain, and Bailey 1992, 102).

The 1994 report *Cultural Diversity and Early Education* emphasizes that effective instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse groups of children does not differ from effective instruction for all children. The report identifies

> five principles of instruction that have emerged from research in cognitive science: (1) knowledge is constructed, (2) through active participation, (3) in a social context, (4) in which forms of communication developed in the culture are encouraged and available, and (5) used to establish a community of learners. Practices that support these principles include small-group instruction, ample opportunities for children to participate and work directly with materials, and tasks that enable children to discover new ideas and concepts in the process of working with materials.
>
> The flexibility in instructional practices that these principles suggest—offering multiple ways for children to demonstrate their learning, to participate in classroom activities, and to work interactively with adults and other children—may be particularly conducive to teaching diverse groups of students (Board on Children and Families and others 1994, 28).

To ensure that multicultural concepts are a part of the curriculum, teachers need time to broaden their own knowledge by seeking out new ideas, materials, and points of view from a wide variety of sources. Communicating with parents and other community members who volunteer in the classroom helps teachers understand students' behavior. Teachers should be encouraged to watch children's behavior and to discover the role that culture may play in that behavior. For example, rather than requiring all students to represent their knowledge in a particular way, teachers offer children latitude in how they choose to engage in learning activities. Some children may need to observe others for a while before they are comfortable joining in; others may want to practice with the teacher before they begin to work with their classmates; others may be most comfortable working in collaboration with peers from start to finish (Board on Children and Families and others 1994).

An Example of Best Practice

At Four Seasons Elementary School, Ms. Smith changes her approaches and strategies to meet the needs of students from various ethnic cultures and socioeconomic and language groups. She enables students to capitalize on their personal learning styles. Understanding that students' responses are often influenced by their home culture, she enhances the involvement of many students by using active discussion, rather than one-way communication from the teacher to the student; through conversational discussions, rather than teacher-directed responses by individual students; and by role-playing and call-response methods. The active involvement of students of some cultures is enhanced by challenging all students to meet personal goals, as opposed to competing with other students, and by allowing students to work collaboratively in certain situations to create group products.

Ms. Smith realizes that some students come to school with an orientation toward learning from peers, rather than from adults, so she assigns students to lead some group activities and discussions. Each group is made up of students with various

abilities, including students with special needs, but every child has an important and formally assigned role.

Ms. Smith capitalizes on each English learner's existing language ability. She uses the English-language development standards to plan appropriate experiences for her English learners. Aware of the differences between the children's vocabularies and that of the classroom textbook, she uses realia—actual objects, as opposed to representations, such as models, pictures, or written labels—and hands-on experiences to improve students' comprehension of concepts to build vocabulary and skills.

During the teacher-directed math lesson, complex problems are presented to the class for solution. Students explain how they arrived at their answers, assist one another in finding solutions, and praise each other's success. During the social studies lesson, Ms. Smith asks various types of questions, using actual photographs of community sites that correspond with the unit. By focusing on each child's unique characteristics, Ms. Smith helps each student to achieve standards and all students to recognize and appreciate their differences as well as their similarities.

Steps Along the Way

Each of the steps listed below identifies actions that schools can take to actively involve all students in the inclusive core curriculum:

- Seek out students' prior knowledge and experience as a basis from which to teach new information and skills.
- Select textbooks, library books, computer software, and other resource materials that incorporate examples that reflect California's diverse population.
- Recruit educators whose backgrounds or credentials prepared them to teach English learners and who represent the cultural, language, and ethnic diversity of the school and the community.
- Use thematic instruction and project-based approaches to curriculum design, each of which build on students' interests. Promote meaningful activities and take advantage of students' strengths while providing opportunities to learn based on grade-level standards.
- Provide supplemental instructional and support services for homeless and migrant students at shelters and other temporary residences to enable them to achieve standards.

Shared Responsibilities

The following stakeholders share these responsibilities toward ensuring the implementation of Recommendation 7:

- Parents and organizations representing various cultures seek additional ways to emphasize culture in the curriculum.
- Educators, parents, students, and communities challenge their own assumptions about learning expectations for culturally diverse students, English learners, and students with needs.

- Groups, such as the Parent Teacher Association, Healthy Start, the school site council, and school board, work together to make all families feel like a part of the school.
- Districts supply the necessary expertise, professional development, and access to materials so that schools can meet the challenges of providing active involvement in the curriculum for students with diverse needs.
- Teacher preparation institutions prepare educators to meet the needs of a diverse student population.
- Local businesses, civic groups, churches, and public agencies band together to provide services to families who may need temporary assistance.

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Wyman, S. L. 1993. *How to Respond to Your Culturally Diverse Student Population.* Alexandria, Va.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Web Sites

The Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE) at the University of California, Santa Cruz, assists educators by identifying and developing effective educational practices for linguistic- and cultural-minority students. Additional information is available on its Web site. <http://www.crede.ucsc.edu/home.html>

The National Coalition for the Homeless provides numerous resources on homelessness and education for children and youths. <http://nch.ari.net>

Information about special education services, programs, research, and promising practices and links to other web sites are available on the California Department of Education Web site. <http://www.cde.ca.gov/spbranch/sed>

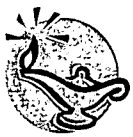
The California Association for the Gifted Web site provides information for educators and parents about differentiated curriculum and educational issues affecting gifted students. <http://www.cagifted.org>

Recommendation 8:

Implement Aggressive Intervention Strategies.

The school does not merely provide services to children, it constantly assesses the results of the services it provides and keeps varying or adding services until every child is making it.

—Robert E. Slavin, Nancy L. Karweit, and Barbara A. Wasik
Preventing Early School Failure



Rationale

Successful elementary schools provide all students with quality instruction and offer a broad range of intervention strategies that are used to bring students up to grade-level expectations. Schools need a comprehensive approach to preventing academic failure and to ensuring that all students meet high expectations. According to the United States Department of Education (*Taking Responsibility* 1999), the number of students meeting grade-level expectations would be increased significantly if educators concentrated on:

- Setting clear objectives for students to meet performance standards at key grades
- Identifying student needs early on and intervening with appropriate instructional strategies
- Providing high-quality curriculum and instruction for all students
- Providing professional development that deepens teachers' content knowledge and improves instructional strategies to engage all children in learning
- Providing summer school for students who are not meeting academic standards
- Extending learning time by providing before- and after-school programs, tutoring, homework centers, and year-round schooling
- Reducing class sizes in the primary grades
- Keeping students and teachers together for more than one year

Schools should have a comprehensive system of interventions that will meet students' needs that range from having trouble with a few concepts to being seriously behind in meeting grade-level standards. The importance of early intervention cannot be overemphasized. Participation in interventions should be triggered as soon as a student is identified as having difficulty with a concept or progressing toward a standard. By continuously monitoring student progress, some interventions can be initiated immediately to prevent students from falling further behind. Examples of such interventions include:

- Reteaching a concept using a different instructional technique
- Relating concepts to the student's background knowledge
- Providing struggling students with additional practice, tutoring, or more frequent feedback

Students who fall further behind will require more intensive interventions. These include:

- Enrolling students in summer school or intersession programs
- Seeking comments from a student study team, especially for students with special needs
- Providing supplemental instructional materials
- Placing in small classes students who are at risk of not meeting standards, regardless of their assigned grade level
- Assigning the best teachers within a district to schools whose students show the greatest need
- Forming temporary groups of students with similar needs to receive short-term intensive instruction
- Maintaining a full-time reading specialist on staff at each school to work with students and to provide ongoing coaching to classroom teachers
- Extending learning time by making long-term arrangements with a qualified adult to tutor before or after school or during other non-school time

Innovative grouping practices, such as within-class ability grouping, divide students into small groups based on performance. Within-class ability grouping must use frequent assessment so that students can be regrouped as their progress dictates. Within-class ability grouping must be differentiated from tracking, in which students are assigned to groups over a long period of time. The practice of tracking has been found to be detrimental to the performance of low-performing students.

Looping, the practice of a teacher's staying with a group of students for more than one year, offers students the potential for academic and social benefits (Burke 1997). By having students, parents, and teachers continue the relationships that they developed during the previous school year, looping essentially adds an extra month of teaching and learning time during the second year, because the typical transition period at the

Ending Social Promotion

California recently passed legislation aimed at reducing social promotion and providing funds for intensive instructional support for students who are at risk of retention or who have been retained. Districts have been encouraged to develop policies that focus on preventing retention by identifying early on those students who are at risk of being retained and by intervening aggressively to help them.

> Neither promoting students when they are unprepared nor simply retaining them in the same grade is the right response to low student achievement. Both approaches presume that high rates of initial failure are inevitable and acceptable. Ending social promotions by simply holding more students back is the wrong choice. Students who are required to repeat a year are more likely than other students to eventually drop out, and few catch up academically with their peers. The right approach is to ensure that more students are prepared to meet challenging academic standards in the first place.

Source: *Taking Responsibility for Ending Social Promotion: A Guide for Educators and State and Local Leaders.* 1999. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, p. 1.

beginning of the school year is unnecessary. Looping helps maintain supportive relationships between teachers, students, and parents that can enhance student motivation and learning.

Tutoring can support classroom instruction, particularly for students who are having trouble learning basic concepts (*Taking Responsibility* 1999). Individualized tutoring can be adapted to a child's pace, learning style, and level of comprehension and can also motivate students who have fallen behind. Tutoring programs can use community members and businesses in helping children reach higher standards. Cross-age tutoring has been found to be beneficial to both the student providing the tutoring and the student receiving the tutoring. Student tutors are frequently able to present subject matter in terms that fellow students can comprehend. Peer tutoring encourages the modeling of study skills and work habits. Although tutoring is a promising strategy, it needs to be carefully implemented. Tutors, both child and adult, need effective training in content and tutorial skills. Tutors also need the supervision and support of teachers and administrators so that their work and the students' progress are closely monitored and coordinated.

Reducing class size has been found to be an effective strategy for increasing student achievement, particularly in the early elementary grades (Finn 1998). The results from Tennessee's Student Teacher Achievement Ratio (STAR) program indicate that the benefits of class size reduction are even greater for disadvantaged and minority students. Findings from the first-year evaluation of California's class size reduction program indicate that there have been small improvements in student achievement (Carlos and Howell 1999).

To ensure that instructional time is used to the fullest extent possible, schools need to increase instructional time by limiting interruptions and other nonessential activities. In addition, the instructional time needs to be carefully planned to continuously engage students in challenging work. Students who do not identify, participate, and succeed in school are increasingly at risk of academic failure. Schools must encourage students' involvement in academic and extracurricular activities by stimulating their interest, improving their skills, and rewarding their efforts (Rossi and Stringfield 1997).

An Example of Best Practice

District and school administrators in Golden Bear School District met to evaluate the district's system of instructional interventions. They wanted to ensure that all students in the district meet the standards for promotion. At the elementary level, the district planned to make the following components a part of the instructional program for all students: (1) three-hour literacy block; (2) class size reductions in kindergarten through grade three; and (3) multiage looping. The district is implementing multiage looping on a pilot basis in selected elementary schools. Based on the results of the pilot, the district will determine whether it wants to expand the program.

For students who need additional assistance, student study teams were established at each elementary school to bring the teacher, specialists, student, and family members together to plan ways to meet the learning needs of each referred student. The following targeted interventions are available: (1) one-on-one instruction and small-group

instruction; (2) an after-school reading program for students needing additional help in specific reading skills; and (3) standards-based intersession and summer school programs.

Resource teachers work in classrooms and in resource rooms with special-needs students. Gifted and talented education programs use differentiated instruction and community members to offer educational enrichment. Through this network of intersecting strategies, the schools within the district have been able to meet the needs of nearly all students. Staff plans a special in-service day to make sure that all the needed interventions will be in place and that no child slips through the cracks.

Steps Along the Way

Each of the steps listed below identifies actions that schools can take to implement aggressive intervention strategies:

- Conduct periodic and timely assessments of student work to identify which students are not meeting standards and need immediate intervention.
- Use mentor teachers or specially trained teachers to coach staff on in-class intervention strategies.
- Use student study teams to evaluate student data and determine the types of intervention needed by particular students.
- Establish regular grade-level meetings in which teachers, parents, and administrators can review the work of students needing assistance.
- Use site- and district-level specialists to assist teachers in providing differentiated instruction to improve student achievement.

Shared Responsibilities

The following stakeholders share these responsibilities toward ensuring the implementation of Recommendation 8:

- District and school administrators plan a comprehensive program of interventions that are available to all district students who need additional help to meet grade-level standards.
- District resources are allocated to provide effective interventions for students.
- Parents and students make the achievement of grade-level standards their priority, even if it means that students attend class before and after regular instructional hours or during intersession or summer breaks.

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Web Sites

The California Department of Education's Pupil Promotion and Retention Web page provides links to legislation on this issue. The page also offers information about funding and additional resources. <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ppr>

The California Department of Education's Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program Web page provides resources on research-based school reform models. <http://www.cde.ca.gov/iasa/csrd>

The results from the statewide evaluation of the elementary Class Size Reduction Program in California are available on the CSR Research Consortium Web site. <http://www.classize.org>

Recommendation 9:

Build Partnerships with Other Stakeholders to Meet the Needs of the Whole Child.

In a democratic society we must live cooperatively, and serve the community in which we live, to the best of our ability. For our own success to be real, it must contribute to the success of others.

—Eleanor Roosevelt

Rationale

While a standards-based system focuses on a student's need to meet rigorous academic standards, academic success is more likely when the development of the *whole* child is attended to within the context of the family, school, and community. The entire community has an investment in seeing that children reach their academic potential and become lifelong learners and productive citizens. Physical and emotional health, safety, security, child care and development, recreation opportunities, housing, peer relationships, and family employment all play an important role in developing and nurturing a child toward success in learning. Providing for all these areas is outside the expertise of public schools. Establishing partnerships to provide learning support helps students meet high expectations. Partners include, but are not limited to, parents, caregivers, preschool and after-school educators, community members, business partners, college and university professors, representatives of professional organizations, public and private agencies, schools, and school districts. Partners support the educational process when they participate in decision making, training, or volunteer activities.

Schools and districts may provide directly to students certain learning supports, such as guidance and counseling services or early intervention. Consider the example of a school district that is educating a small number of families to do appropriate hands-on language arts and mathematics activities at home. In turn, these families host education parties in their homes for others to learn these techniques. The district's informal evaluation demonstrated that participating parents became more active at school, used the school libraries more frequently, and worked more extensively with their school-age children and younger children to achieve better academic results.

Another type of intervention is supplied to students under adult supervision in formalized after-school programs, such as the Healthy Start Program or the After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program. Students in these programs are more likely to show improved academic achievement and better attitudes toward school than do their peers in self- or sibling-care. After-school programs provide safe, drug-free, supervised, and cost-efficient opportunities for children in which learning time is extended.

Some partnerships with local businesses and community organizations may enable students to apply their knowledge and contribute to the community through service-

learning projects or career education programs (California Department of Education 1999). Other partnerships rely on the volunteer and outreach efforts of local organizations, such as:

- Police and sheriff departments that provide drug and violence prevention programs
- Recreation departments that offer after-school recreation and sports
- Big Brothers and Big Sisters programs, environmental clubs, and cultural clubs
- Grandparents Reading Club
- Civic organizations' campus recycling efforts

Other partnerships housed on or near a school campus may address the health and physical needs of children and their families. "A rich body of literature confirms a direct link between student health risk behavior and education outcomes, education behaviors, and student attitudes about education" (Symons and others 1997). For example, the Child Health and Disability Program (California Department of Health Services) assists families in obtaining needed immunizations and health screenings, preventing diseases, limiting risk factors, helping students to be healthy, and reducing health-related absences.

The Healthy Start Program provides needy families access to a full range of services, including clinical services and intervention, job preparation and training, student and parent volunteer projects, tutoring, and child care. Healthy Start has produced materials to assist schools in building, maintaining, and evaluating effective partnerships (Lodge 1998; "Effective Collaboration" 1999).

Perhaps the most important and productive partnership that schools can enter into is one with their students' parents and families. Ongoing research indicates an overwhelmingly positive effect on student achievement when schools foster the active participation, expertise, and support of parents (*A New Generation of Evidence* 1994). Children whose parents are involved in their education earn higher grades and test scores, attend school more regularly, complete more homework, demonstrate a better attitude and better behavior, and are more likely to go on to higher education than children whose parents are less involved. The Family-School Partnership Act (*Labor Code* Section 230.8) enables parents, grandparents, and guardians to take time off from work to participate in children's school or child care activities. Parents' active participation is closely linked with the school's willingness to "meet parents on their turf . . . make schools parent friendly . . . bridge the language gap . . . involve parents in decision making . . . [and] help parents help their children" (Gutloff 1997, 4–5). The United States Department of Education (*Employers, Families, and Education* 1999) identifies activities that can lead to successful parent-school partnerships:

- Parent resource centers in schools can draw parents into the school community while providing important information on helping children succeed in core subjects.
- Family literacy programs can teach parents to read in English.
- Home visits by qualified school staff can help parents reinforce their children's learning at home.
- Parental participation in decision making at school can be advanced when parents receive needed information and support.

- Parent-school compacts can outline the mutual responsibilities of home and school.
- Staff training is necessary to provide teachers, principals, and school staff with methods for working effectively with parents.

An Example of Best Practice

The Juan Julio School staff is committed to developing a successful parent-school partnership to help students become more productive in school. Assessment results indicate that many of its sixth-grade students, especially students from economically disadvantaged families, were performing at the basic level of proficiency in English–language arts and consistently receiving low reading grades. Some students had poor attendance and behavioral problems. Home surveys showed that after-school care was needed, but parents were unaware of the community agencies that might assist them.

The school receives a Healthy Start grant to support its partnership planning activities. A steering committee of parents, representatives of business and community organizations, and persons from local health agencies, preschools, and after-school programs meet with school staff. They review the health and physical education frameworks, identify needs, discuss potential partnership goals, determine resources, and design an effective way to evaluate progress, especially in terms of students' achievement of standards.

As a result of the partnership, the school staff increases its links between curriculum and other aspects of children's lives; for example, by studying healthy eating habits. The district starts before- and after-school programs that provide tutoring and sports and recreation activities. Adult education staff offers English-as-a-second-language and citizenship classes.

Churches organize a food bank and clothes closet at the school so that students are not hungry or cold in class or at home. An outreach worker visits children in homeless shelters to ensure that they remain in school. Local businesses sponsor field trips that extend and integrate the curriculum and provide release time for staff to mentor or tutor students.

Volunteer parents translate homework assignments for the school's telephone hot line and read with their children each day. Students are also members of the partnerships—older students tutor younger children and participate in conflict resolution teams. All the students take part in service-learning projects that extend their classroom learning and help their neighborhood. They all sign commitments to do homework and to encourage classmates to do their best.

After the Healthy Start program's second year, the school has clear evidence that economically disadvantaged students have improved their academic performance. Staff also observes a positive effect on children's behavior and improvements in classroom learning, pointing to the partnership's success.

Steps Along the Way

Each of the steps listed below identifies actions that schools can take to build partnerships with other stakeholders to meet the needs of the whole child:

- Use effective networking strategies to build community partnerships.
- Review the partnerships to determine how they promote achievement of standards or other curricular goals (e.g., music, art, health, or physical education).
- Analyze periodically the types of partnerships offered in a school or district and discern where fine-tuning may be particularly advantageous to students. For example, recreation program staff may realize that after-school students need additional help with academic subjects. The staff discusses educational goals with classroom teachers, obtains AmeriCorps volunteers, and begins a tutorial program.
- Celebrate and publicize successes of the partnerships.

Shared Responsibilities

The following stakeholders share these responsibilities toward ensuring the implementation of Recommendation 9:

- Parents volunteer or provide supplies, materials, or time to share a talent or experience.
- Businesses promote policies that encourage employees to be involved in their children's education (e.g., flex time, leave policies), donate needed materials, and mentor students and parents.
- County offices of education, districts, and schools bring together stakeholder-partners to plan for materials and support.
- The California Department of Education promotes access to data and best practices about partnerships that further children's social, emotional, physical, and academic development.

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Web Sites

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program has a page on the U.S. Department of Education Web site. The page offers information on after-school, weekend, and summer programs for youths as well as resources to order or download. <http://www.ed.gov/21stcclc>

The California Department of Education Web site has several pages that focus on partnerships, including the After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program. These pages offer information on training and grants, opportunities for collaboration, and links to research and other related web sites at <http://www.cde.ca.gov>. The Department Web site also provides information about the Family-School Partnership Act of 1994. <http://www.cde.ca.gov/cyfsbranch/lsp/fpfact.htm>

The U.S. Department of Education has a Web page devoted to partnerships. This page includes information about parent-school compacts. <http://pfie.ed.gov/welcome.php3>

Recommendation 10:

Develop and Reinforce Positive Character Traits.

Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education.

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

Rationale

Effective schools seek to develop and reinforce character traits, such as caring, citizenship, fairness, respect, responsibility, and trustworthiness, through a systematic approach that includes adult modeling, curriculum integration, a positive school climate, and access to comprehensive guidance and counseling services. Typical guidance lessons focus on self-awareness at the kindergarten level, social skills in grade one, personal behavior and friendship skills in grade two, anger management skills in grade three, conflict resolution in grade four, responsibility and goal setting in grade five, and skills for coping with stress in grade six (*Elementary School Counseling and Guidance* 1999).

The State Board of Education has developed the *Handbook on the Rights and Responsibilities of School Personnel* (California Department of Education 1994a), which contains information concerning what can and should be taught in public schools related to morals, civic values, ethics, manners, religion, democratic principles, understanding of human differences, responsible attitudes and behaviors, and respect for the dignity of all people. The California Department of Education has joined the national research and development effort on this issue through a pilot project, California Partnerships in Character Education, which investigates ways to implement character education.

Classroom curriculum is a natural means by which positive character traits can be reinforced. By integrating character education throughout subject areas, students can see its application to life situations. Students can study the personal character of heroes, heroines, and villains of times past and present, in social science and history. Moral dilemmas and character attributes can be discussed in literature, and the ethical consequences of falsifying results can be addressed in studying mathematics, physical education, and science.

> Each teacher shall endeavor to impress upon the minds of the pupils the principles of morality, truth, justice, patriotism, and a true comprehension of the rights, duties, and dignity of American citizenship, and the meaning of equality and human dignity, including the promotion of harmonious relations, kindness toward domestic pets and the humane treatment of living creatures, to teach them to avoid idleness, profanity, and falsehood, and to instruct them in manners and morals and the principles of a free government (*Education Code* Section 233.5.[a]).

The climate of a school can also reinforce positive character traits through the attitude of its staff and students, by policies and procedures, and through its physical appearance. Identifying adults within the school community who model positive character traits and ethical behavior can also serve as an effective way to support character development (Thomas and Roberts 1994).

Establishing positive character traits in elementary school students can be greatly enhanced through psychological and counseling services provided by specially credentialed educational specialists. Children establish lifelong behavioral patterns from ages six through ten—the first four years of school (California Department of Education 1992). To assist classroom teachers and parents in dealing with potential problems, counselors can provide early detection of mental and emotional problems among students in elementary schools. Counseling programs can also help prevent the types of problems that surface at the secondary level, or later in adulthood, by providing opportunities for students to develop feelings of self-worth and positive attitudes toward learning, work, and society (California Department of Education 1981). Finally, guidance and counseling services should be an integral component of each school's comprehensive school health system and should provide elementary-grade students with support and assistance in making healthy decisions, managing emotions, coping with crises, and setting short- and long-term goals (California Department of Education 1994b).

California still ranks last in the nation in the number of students per counselor (Urbaniak 1999, 4). A first step toward providing quality programs and services to students is the development of a comprehensive guidance and counseling plan as an integral part of a total educational plan (California State Board of Education 1995).

An Example of Best Practice

Character education is a high priority at Sandstone Elementary School and has been integrated into all curricular areas; character is a part of the school climate, and all adults model appropriate behavior. Direct teaching of positive character traits and actions is provided through the collaborative efforts of the classroom teacher and the district counseling staff. Counselors meet the needs of at-risk students by working closely with parents or through small-group or individual counseling.

Parents and community members are united in promoting character education and rewarding positive behavior. Weekly bulletins describe notable deeds performed by staff, students, or classes, and praise is given to persons who have been diligent and have persevered in projects. Sandstone has replaced traditional holiday parties with community- or school-based community service-learning projects or philanthropies. Students tutor younger students and assist senior citizens in a breakfast program. Sandstone students have learned conflict resolution techniques, assisting peers in learning the techniques of problem solving without using violence or offensive language. Adults at Sandstone School model kindness, cooperation, respect, and hard work. Compliments are given for acts of kindness, perseverance, hard work, honesty, and fairness. All staff, students, and community members understand the expectations for positive behavior, and consistent and fair consequences result when inappropriate

choices are made. The school not only teaches and reinforces positive character traits but also embodies those traits as an institution.

Steps Along the Way

Each of the steps listed below identifies actions that schools can take to develop and reinforce positive character traits:

- Develop a comprehensive guidance and counseling plan to provide direct student intervention and to assist teachers in designing preventive curricula.
- Integrate character education concepts and traits into daily instruction.
- Provide opportunities for students to apply character education concepts in school and in community service-learning projects.

Shared Responsibilities

The following stakeholders share these responsibilities toward ensuring the implementation of Recommendation 10:

- Policymakers make counseling a high priority and commit funds to that end.
- Community partnerships enable students to apply character education elements in service-learning or career-education activities.
- The media highlight the positive work and achievements of students and other community members.
- Districts budget for new character education resources/materials that can be used to positively influence students as a part of daily instruction.

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Web Sites

The California Association for Counseling and Development Web site assists educators in identifying counseling resources, research, programs, and services. <http://www.cacd.org>

The California Department of Education's Character Education Web page contains numerous references and online resources concerning character education. <http://www.cde.ca.gov/character>

The California Partnerships in Character Education's Web page contains character education resources and California model school information. <http://www.clre.org/program/ce/ccephome.htm>

Recommendation 11:

Select Effective Instructional Materials and Resources, Including Technology.

Children who aren't logged on and literate will be lost in the twenty-first century.

—Mary R. Somerville, President
American Library Association, 1996-97

Rationale

Students' engagement with standards-based work should also guide the selection of instructional materials and resources. The State Board of Education has adopted instructional materials and resources that describe specific ways for the teacher to address the learning needs of different students and thereby ensure access for all students to the core grade-level materials and instruction (California Department of Education 1999b). No single material or resource is right for every student. This recommendation encourages the use of instructional materials and technology to expand the curriculum and individual learning opportunities in challenging and creative ways.

In selecting the most appropriate instructional materials and resources, teachers and library media teachers need to consider their students' needs, strengths, interests, ages, language proficiency, knowledge base, and cultural backgrounds. Instructional materials adopted before 1999 by the State Board of Education for English–language arts and mathematics may not necessarily be aligned with content standards. When possible, districts should select newly adopted instructional materials that (1) align with content standards; (2) provide structure concerning what students should learn each year; (3) provide strategies, procedures, and tools for assessing what students know, how well they know it, and what they are able to do; (4) provide practices and materials supporting students with special learning needs; and (5) provide instructional planning and support information and materials needed for a successful course of study (California Department of Education 1999b).

Teachers should be asking, What do I need to enable students to meet this standard? Considerations should include developmental appropriateness and the type of realia necessary to meet student needs, especially those of English learners. Being able to see or to use one's hands to examine a scientific principle or mathematics concept provides an effective instructional tool. These same criteria would apply to the selection of technology for use in teaching to the standards: Does this technology assist this specific child or group of children in achieving this particular standard? Asking students to apply basic skills and knowledge to real-life situations will similarly help them to recall information and transfer it to other situations. For example, students graph data that they have gathered through scientific experimentation or surveys.

All students should be able to see themselves in curriculum materials that represent California's rich diversity. Using primary-source materials can add authenticity to

learning and deepen students' understanding. For example, letters and student-written books can stimulate reading and writing; baseball box scores in the local newspaper or on the Internet can be used to teach statistics; and recipes can lead to and support a student's mastery of fractions.

Establishing and maintaining a well-stocked and up-to-date school library or multimedia center, staffed by a credentialed library media teacher, are essential to connecting students, teachers, and others with the information skills and resources they need. Credentialed library media teachers can teach research skills, assist with the integration of technology, motivate students, and collaborate with classroom teachers to ensure that the school library is an integral part of teaching and learning.

Technology can promote mastery of academic standards. For many students, technology is motivating. Research has found that students compose better on the computer and "revise their work more frequently than when they use paper and pencil" (Klenow 1992, 70). The Internet expands national and international boundaries to allow connections to an ever-broadening array of resources to enhance students' learning in unprecedented ways. Students must learn at an early age to become skillful and active information users and creative locators, evaluators, and problem solvers (AASL and AECT 1999). A variety of media enables students to effectively communicate ideas and information to an audience and fosters collaboration among peers and content experts. Researchers note "an increase in motivation and closely related constructs such as interest and enjoyment of schoolwork, task involvement, persistence, time on task, and retention [of information] in school" when technology is integrated into the curriculum. "These positive effects were found for special needs students and regular education students alike, for native English speakers and for students with limited English proficiency, for students in early childhood education as well as higher education" (1999 Research Report on the Effectiveness of Technology in Schools 1999, 70). Young children profit from computer activities that suit the children's developmental levels and are supported by appropriate adult assistance (Hohmann 1990, 4).

A school's investment in technology, however, extends beyond the cost of equipment and software components. The investment necessitates a commitment to adequate support for the technology itself as well as to staff development to ensure that technology is integrated into the curriculum. School and district technology plans should be driven by academic standards and students' needs.

An Example of Best Practice

High Sights Elementary School recently completed an assessment of its students' mastery of grade-level content. Based on the results of this assessment and having read the new state curriculum frameworks, school personnel determined the need to update their instructional materials. Staff visited the local Learning Resource Display Center and examined newly adopted instructional materials, including instructional software. They identified several curricular areas within their instructional program that needed strengthening. They planned to use newly allocated Schiff-Bustamante supplementary funding, school library funding, and classroom library funding to

purchase instructional resources that are aligned with standards. Staff members wanted to expand materials available to students with reading difficulties or disabilities who needed additional opportunities for intensive, systematic teaching and practice necessary to meet standards. The staff also wanted materials that stimulate the achievement of advanced learners.

High Sights Elementary School staff also noted that much of the school's technology was out-of-date and that their computer hardware did not support the newer software. They formed a technology committee and conducted a needs assessment. The committee projected that the new instructional materials would necessitate both staff development and curriculum revisions. The needs assessment asked about teachers' technological backgrounds, projected instructional use, and attitudes toward technology. Committee members visited other district classrooms to see effective uses of computers. The committee planned for technology integration by answering the question, What type of technology do our students need to better support their achievement of academic standards, particularly in mathematics and language arts?

The committee recommended purchasing high-quality instructional resources, including hardware and software, that supported teaching aligned to standards. The recommendation to continue ongoing needs assessments and technology evaluations was also built into the committee's plan. By thoroughly investigating curricular needs for instructional materials and resources, this district is better able to serve all students.

Steps Along the Way

Each of the steps listed below identifies actions that schools can take to select effective instructional materials and resources, including technology:

- Develop instructional materials that are effective with special-needs students, including highly mobile students and English learners.
- Expand access to library resources by extending hours.
- Expand staff development opportunities to allow teachers and staff to become computer literate, and redesign curriculum to take advantage of technology.

Shared Responsibilities

The following stakeholders share these responsibilities toward ensuring the implementation of Recommendation 11:

- Parents and community members assist educators in the selection of standards-based instructional materials.
- Parents, students, and staff take ethical and social responsibility for monitoring and using technology at the school site.
- Each school district has an *acceptable-use* policy, signed by every student's parent or guardian, that clearly delineates the district's position on Internet use, copyright, network etiquette, e-mail, security, and plagiarism. Districts may want to consider using a commercial Internet filter.

- Districts establish a goal to have a fully credentialed library media teacher at every site to oversee a state-of-the-art school library.
- Boards of trustees and district offices provide the time and funding for teachers to research new materials and learn to use them effectively.
- Institutions of higher education prepare new teachers to properly select instructional materials and to use technology to further academic goals.

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Web Site

The Schools of California Online Resources for Educators (SCORE) Web site offers web-based classroom resources from California schools in history, math, science, social studies, and language arts, including literature guides for many kindergarten-through-twelfth-grade titles. <http://www.score.k12.ca.us>

Recommendation 12:

Engage in Purposeful Dialogue Between Grade Levels.

Students make many transitions during their years of schooling. . . .These transitions are usually major events in the lives of students and parents. The stresses created by these transitions can be minimized when the new environment is responsive to each particular age group.

—Donna Schumacher
"The Transition to Middle School"

Rationale

Some children may start school at a disadvantage compared with other students, so it is important for parents, community members, and educators to work together to establish appropriate transition activities for all children. Purposeful dialogue between preschool and elementary staffs and between elementary and middle-school staffs enables children to more easily make the transition to new situations and staff to become more aware of appropriate methods to address students' intellectual, physical, social, and emotional development.

Children who make successful adjustments to new school situations become highly motivated and confident in trying new experiences and develop positive interpersonal relationships. Four practices have been identified that help children experience positive transitions: appropriate educational practices, effective communication between educators across grade levels, preparation of children for transition, and involvement of parents or other family members in the transition process (Hubbell and others 1987; California Department of Education 1997). Elementary school educators who create professional partnerships with preschools and middle schools facilitate students' easy transition and achievement of standards. These educators also help parents to understand that readiness for school includes social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development.

In a standards-based system, each student's ability to learn depends on the student's mastery of the content of the previous grade level. For example, meeting the expectation that all seventh-grade students are able to write narrative, expository, persuasive, and descriptive texts of at least 500 words to 700 words depends on their cumulative achievement of each previous grade's writing standards. Elementary students who transfer to middle schools need to be academically proficient in all subject areas, especially language arts and mathematics.

The transition to middle school is often tremulous for students as they develop independence and a sense of self. Students' confidence in their academic achievement assists them in maintaining positive self-concepts and the empowerment developed in the elementary years. By establishing a meaningful dialogue about middle school, elementary school staff can better ensure students an easier academic transition, which enhances the students' total transition to a more independently oriented middle school environment.

An Example of Best Practice

The Sunflower Elementary School and several of its feeder preschools cosponsor an Off to School I Go Night for incoming kindergartners and their parents. At the event children and parents become familiar with the kindergarten room and materials so that starting school will not be such a mystery. Parents view a video and have a discussion about what a good kindergarten is like and the importance of their involvement. Copies of the video are made available to parents who cannot attend. Preschool teachers role-play with children about riding the school bus and read books about school.

Several times during the year, staffs from preschools, Head Start, and daycare homes meet with kindergarten-through-third-grade staffs to share information and professional development activities on topics of mutual interest, such as early literacy. A few days before school begins, families attend an evening picnic during which they meet their children's teachers. On the first day of school, each new student receives a friendly welcome, and parents are encouraged to congregate in the cafeteria for coffee.

Sunflower School teachers work with middle-school teachers to offer transition activities for sixth-graders. An assembly is held in the spring for sixth-graders to learn more from the middle-school principal and counselor about the future program. A late-spring field trip is scheduled for students to become familiar with the new school environment. An evening information session is held for the parents of sixth-graders. Middle-school counselors and volunteers travel to Sunflower to register sixth-grade students for fall classes. In late spring, class schedules are sent home, and, during the summer, letters are sent to students at their homes to welcome them to school and invite them to a school orientation. At the orientation students are able to meet school staff and practice moving from class to class.

Steps Along the Way

Each of the steps listed below identifies actions that schools can take to engage in purposeful dialogue between grade levels:

- Provide opportunities for discussions among kindergarten teachers and feeder preschool staffs on subjects, such as standards in kindergarten and what preschools might do in a developmentally appropriate way to prepare preschool children to enter kindergarten.

> Will my teacher like me? Who will be my friend? Will everyone be like me? Where will I hang my jacket? How will I know where the bathroom is?
>
> —Compilation of student questions collected by preschool teachers
> *Continuity for Young Children*

- Share summaries and samples of preschool students' work with kindergarten teachers so that a new teacher knows what a child has already accomplished.
- Ensure a steady sequence of skills by having teachers in grades four, five, and six meet with middle-school language arts and mathematics teachers. Teachers at each level share samples of student work and their expectations for students.
- Invite middle-school teachers and preschool teachers to professional development activities in which they may participate as learners or experts in various subject areas.
- Invite elementary students to middle-school campuses to become familiar with the environment, find their classes, and meet their scheduled teachers.
- Follow up with colleagues in upper grades to assess how former students are doing and use the results to plan possible adjustments to elementary curriculum and instruction.

Shared Responsibilities

The following stakeholders share these responsibilities toward ensuring the implementation of Recommendation 12:

- Teachers meet periodically with colleagues in grade-level and across-grade-level teams to assess students' achievements.
- Community health organizations provide medical check-ups or referrals for students before they start kindergarten or middle school to enable physical *readiness* for the new experience.
- Older students or community members serve as translators for parents at transition events.
- The Governor and the Legislature provide adequate funding to families for universal preschool experiences; preschools should receive incentives to locate their facilities in neighborhoods with low-income families or English learners.
- Districts plan for students' transitions from elementary to middle school.
- Community or civic organizations that serve students invite educators across program lines and age groups to participate in shared professional development opportunities.
- Businesses and parent groups provide books, videos, or other materials to help children become aware of what to expect.

Selected References and Further Reading

California Department of Education. 1987. *Caught in the Middle: Educational Reform for Young Adolescents in California Public Schools.* Sacramento: California Department of Education.

California Department of Education. 1997. *Continuity for Young Children: Positive Transitions to Elementary School.* Sacramento: California Department of Education.

California Department of Education. 1999. *First Class: A Guide for Early Primary Education, Preschool–Kindergarten–First Grade*. Sacramento: California Department of Education.

Charting the Course: The Journey Begins (videocassette). 1996. 14 min. Instructional Television Videos, San Diego County Office of Education (available in English and Spanish).

Hubbell R., and others. 1987. *The Transition of Head Start Children into Public School.* Final Report: Vol. 1. Alexandria, Va.: CSR, Inc.

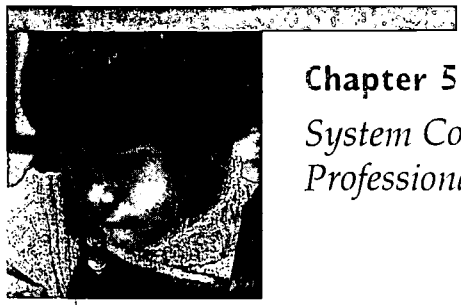
Schumacher, D. 1998. "The Transition to Middle School," *ERIC Digest* (ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, ED422119).

Web Site

The National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education Web site includes information on transitions. <http://ericps.crc.uiuc.edu/naecs>

Chapter 5

System Component IV. Professional Development



Chapter 5

System Component IV. Professional Development

In a standards-based system, the district's and school's staff development plan focuses on improving the ability of educators, schools, and school systems to prepare *all* students to meet high academic standards. In this plan staff members identify the knowledge, skills, and information they need to help create student success.

Professional development experts have devised a continuum of teacher development (see Figure 5-1), beginning with preservice and leading to national certification for experienced teachers by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). The basis for this continuum is the *California Standards for the Teaching Profession* (CSTP) (see Figure 5-2), which is founded on current research and expert advice on best teaching practice. Just as the state uses standards to identify what students should know and be able to do, CSTP identifies what teachers should know and be able to do.

Figure 5-1

Sample Continuum of Teacher Development

Preservice educators (including student teachers) Internship educators	Education from college professors, district or site staff, or hired consultants
Newly credentialed, beginning educators	Assistance through programs, such as the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) program
Experienced educators	Collegial collaboration techniques, such as problem solving, classroom observation, feedback, co-planning, and participation in the California Peer Assistance and Review Program
Educators needing additional assistance	Guidance from teachers and consultants through the California Peer Assistance and Review Program to help develop additional subject-matter knowledge and teaching strategies
Educators striving for certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards	Deep content study using portfolios to indicate knowledge and growth over time

Figure 5-2
California Standards for the Teaching Profession

1. Engaging and supporting all students in learning
   - A. Connecting students' prior knowledge, life experience, and interests with learning goals
   - B. Using a variety of instructional strategies and resources to respond to students' diverse needs
   - C. Facilitating learning experiences that promote autonomy, interaction, and choice
   - D. Engaging students in problem solving, critical thinking, and other activities that make subject matter meaningful
   - E. Promoting self-directed, reflective learning for all students
2. Creating and maintaining effective environments for student learning
   - A. Creating a physical environment that engages all students
   - B. Establishing a climate that promotes fairness and respect
   - C. Promoting social development and group responsibility
   - D. Establishing and maintaining standards for student behavior
   - E. Planning and implementing classroom procedures and routines that support student learning
   - F. Using instructional time effectively
3. Understanding and organizing subject matter for student learning
   - A. Demonstrating knowledge of subject matter content and student development
   - B. Organizing curriculum to support student understanding of subject matter
   - C. Interrelating ideas and information within and across subject matter areas
   - D. Developing student understanding through instructional strategies that are appropriate to the subject matter
   - E. Using materials, resources, and technologies to make subject matter accessible to students
4. Planning instruction and designing learning experiences for all students
   - A. Drawing on and valuing students' backgrounds, interests, and developmental learning needs
   - B. Establishing and articulating goals for student learning
   - C. Developing and sequencing instructional activities and materials for student learning
   - D. Designing short-term and long-term plans to foster student learning
   - E. Modifying instructional plans to adjust for student needs
5. Assessing student learning
   - A. Establishing and communicating learning goals for all students
   - B. Collecting and using multiple sources of information to assess student learning
   - C. Involving and guiding all students in assessing their own learning
   - D. Using the results of assessments to guide instruction
   - E. Communicating with students, families, and other audiences about student progress
6. Developing as a professional educator
   - A. Reflecting on teaching practice and planning professional development
   - B. Establishing professional goals and pursuing opportunities to grow professionally
   - C. Working with communities to improve professional practice
   - D. Working with families to improve professional practice
   - E. Working with colleagues to improve professional practice
   - F. Balancing professional responsibilities and maintaining motivation

Source: *California Standards for the Teaching Profession.* 1997. Sacramento: California Commission on Teacher Credentialing and the California Department of Education.

CSTP reflects a holistic, developmental view of teaching and addresses the diversity of students and teachers in California schools. A holistic view of teaching recognizes that teaching and learning are complex processes that are interdependent, occur in a variety of contexts, and are affected by a variety of factors. A developmental view of teaching recognizes that teachers' knowledge, skills, and practices develop throughout their professional careers and that the nature of teaching requires continuous growth to engage and challenge a diverse student body in a changing world.

CSTP reminds educators of the focus of their professional development—the students. These standards also encourage educators to plan effective professional development by questioning their own practices, How do I . . .? or Why do I. . .? Just as educators expect continuous growth for all students, the system demands continuous growth for all educators. With data showing an alarming rate of teachers and principals leaving the profession, educators need support and guidance, which should be based on CSTP. The continuum of teacher learning encourages ongoing self-review, accountability, and improvement through such processes as the following:

- Program Quality Review (PQR)
- The School Improvement Program's schoolwide plan (which includes the professional development plan as one component)
- The California Peer Assistance and Review Program for Teachers (*Education Code* Section 44500)

Principals are expected to provide leadership to diverse members of the educational community; for example, to involve students, staff, and local organizations; "to build a collaborative school culture . . . to balance and support multiple constituencies"; and to hold staff accountable for student achievement (Bloom 1999). Therefore, principals also need to have access to and support for research-based, quality professional development that includes practice, feedback, mentoring, and coaching. The Association of California School Administrators and the California School Leadership Academy are two organizations that support the use of these techniques through professional development offerings, such as seminars and summer institutes.

Selected References and Further Reading

Bloom, G. 1999. "Sink or Swim No More," *Thrust for Educational Leadership,* Vol. 29, No. 1, 15.

California Standards for the Teaching Profession. 1997. Sacramento: California Commission on Teacher Credentialing and the California Department of Education.

Web Sites

The California School Leadership Academy Web site offers information about professional development programs for administrators and teacher-leaders. <http://www.csla.org>

The Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) Web site offers information on summer institutes, other professional development opportunities, publications, legislation, and other topics. <http://www.acsa.org>

Recommendation 13:

Implement a Professional Development Plan Based on Student Performance.

Research shows that the single most important determinant of what students learn is the expertise of the teacher.

—Linda Darling-Hammond
Doing What Matters Most: Investing in Quality Teaching

Rationale

Student achievement relies on excellent teaching; excellent teaching relies on excellent leadership. The need for experienced and inspirational educational leaders is particularly acute at schools serving low-income areas where, because of class size reduction, fewer qualified teachers are employed (*Class Size Reduction* 1999). For example, a recent study found that 40 percent of the variance in reading and mathematics achievement in grades one through eleven could be attributed to teacher expertise, which was more than to any other factor (*Doing What Matters Most* 1998).

California Standards for the Teaching Profession provides detailed descriptions and topics for questions that guide teachers as they define and develop their craft (see Figure 5-2). The standards accomplish the following:

- Elicit reflection about student learning and teaching practice.
- Formulate professional goals to improve teaching.
- Guide, monitor, and assess the progress of a teacher's practice toward professional goals and professionally accepted benchmarks.

Quality professional development—the kind that results in teachers working with students to internalize the learning they need—may require a lengthy period of time to create improved student achievement. Professional development may occur in a variety of models:

- Conferences and workshops
- Team teaching
- Action research
- Reviews of students' work
- Case studies of practice
- Reflective journal writing
- School site management teams
- Reform and professional networks
- Subject matter institutes
- After-school and evening book clubs

- Study groups
- Site visits to exemplary programs
- Principal support groups
- In-grade or cross-grade-level discussions
- College courses
- Online or videotape sessions
- Peer coaching and mentoring
- Problem-solving groups
- Setting content and performance standards
- Writing for professional journals
- Curriculum and assessment development
- School and university partnerships
- Professional portfolios
- Teacher resource centers

Tucker and Codding (1998) suggest that two of the most powerful methods for improving school performance—analyzing student work and performance (especially using disaggregated data) and identifying best practices—are also among the most effective approaches to professional development for educators. "The first requires teachers to examine their own practices very carefully in relation to the progress that their students are making against the standards; the second gets them into the mode of searching everywhere for the practices most likely to help them meet the student needs that the first activity reveals" (Tucker and Codding 1998, 120).

School principals help establish a school culture that supports the never-ending search for better results. When the principal constantly makes student work the centerpiece of meetings, classroom observations, and evaluations, the whole staff focuses on achievement of standards and a professional development plan to support this effort. An example of a continuous, data-based professional development process is the Results Model (Schmoker 1996), in which educators meet in grade-level teams (or other configurations) to set goals, discuss strategies, and develop a plan for student instruction.

Finding the Time!

School districts find the time necessary for professional development using non-traditional approaches: teaching additional minutes to enable periodic staff meetings; hiring roving substitutes to periodically free teachers to attend staff development meetings; and using technology so that educators can access staff development at a convenient time.

Adapted from King, R. 1999. "Dynamic Models of Professional Development." *The Networker.* Vol. 10, No. 1, 1, 3.

Results Model

The following model enables a team to have a productive meeting in about 30 minutes. It can be tailored to fit a group's specific purposes. The approximate number of minutes for each part is in parentheses. The model was designed by Rosemary Beck, Bill Bendt, and Chris Potter, teachers in the Amphitheater School District, Tucson, Arizona.

Before the Meeting

- *Agenda.* Was the agenda distributed in advance of the meeting? Is it posted in clear view of the participants?
- *Recording Tools.* Are the flip chart, chalkboard, or computer ready to record brainstorming?
- *Designated Tasks.* Have the timekeeper, recorder, and facilitator been appointed?

During the Meeting

Purpose/Goal (1 minute):

- The team leader should establish and articulate the purpose of the meeting: What results are desired? (The general purpose proposed for these meetings is to identify major concerns and strategies to promote better results for an agreed-on goal.)

Strategies That Worked (5 minutes):

- What worked? The team leader gives each member a chance to offer evidence of a strategy that was effective in helping reach the goal since the last meeting.

Chief Challenges (3-5 minutes):

- What is the most urgent concern or problem or biggest obstacle to progress and better results?

Proposed Solutions (8-10 minutes):

- What are the possible concrete, practical solutions to these problems?

Action Plan (10 minutes):

- Which solutions may be best for the team to focus on between now and the next meeting? For example, if the goal or subgoal is to increase the number of quality introductions, the team might focus on a strategy, such as having students analyze model introductions before attempting to revise their own. (If agreement does not emerge quickly, rank-order voting to determine the focus may be useful.)
- If appropriate, the team may need to determine and record the names of people who are responsible for completing specific tasks before the next meeting.

After the Meeting

The team leader distributes a memo documenting the team's focus between now and the next meeting. The minutes of the meeting are saved in a binder to show the group's progress.

Source: Schmoker, M. 1996. *Results: The Key to Continuous School Improvement.* Alexandria, Va.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. pp. 109–110. Adapted with permission from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.

An Example of Best Practice

Mr. Smith, an experienced kindergarten teacher, had considered himself a good teacher, but assessment of his former students showed that they had not achieved grade-level standards. As part of a district team (including the principal, experienced and new teachers of kindergarten through third grade, preschool teachers, and a resource specialist teacher), he attended a California Reading and Literature Project's (CRLP) week-long "Focusing on Results" Professional Development Institute. Participants focused on beginning reading skills, diagnosis, and assessment of reading proficiencies. They learned grade-level instructional methods and techniques to use with English learners. The training was consistent with the *English–Language Arts Content Standards* and the *Reading/Language Arts Framework.*

Mr. Smith applied what he learned as he organized his classroom, planned lessons, and chose instructional materials. During the school year, he received support from colleagues and continuing education sessions led by experienced teachers and university faculty. He shared ideas periodically with preschool and first-grade teachers. As a member of the school book club, he read and discussed professional literature.

He periodically evaluated his kindergarten students' achievement of standards and regrouped the students for specific reading instruction, using techniques he learned at the CRLP institute. He and other kindergarten teachers met weekly to evaluate student work and plan new activities. At a conference for early childhood educators, Mr. Smith said, "I learned it was important to be more focused on my learning goals and how I incorporated them into the daily activities. I also learned to take an eclectic approach, drawing from a wide array of instructional methods so that my students would succeed. The stipend I received helped me to purchase quality professional books and journals and to research my own instructional practices. I plan to present my findings at next year's Family Literacy conference. I will also continue collaborating with preschool and elementary colleagues, because being part of a team approach beats trying to do it on my own."

Steps Along the Way

Each of the steps listed below identifies actions that schools can take to implement a professional development plan based on student performance:

- Collaborate to analyze student work and disaggregated assessment relative to standards. Use areas of underachievement as potential professional development topics.
- Participate in high-quality professional development, such as the California Subject Matter Projects.
- Plan for long-term professional development by using a holistic, developmental model that focuses on improving students' achievements of standards.

Shared Responsibilities

The following stakeholders share these responsibilities toward ensuring the implementation of Recommendation 13:

- Site and district educators share their expertise as content-area experts.
- Parents; preschool, after-school, and middle-school staffs; and others collaborate on professional development opportunities.
- Districts purchase copies of professional literature that are focused on achieving standards so that teachers may reflect on and discuss student progress.
- District and county offices of education publicize research conducted by local educators (Hubbard and Power 1993). Educators analyze and discuss the findings to discover implications for their own programs.

Selected References and Further Reading

California Standards for the Teaching Profession. 1997. Sacramento: California Commission on Teacher Credentialing and the California Department of Education.

Class Size Reduction in California: Early Evaluation Findings, 1996–1998. 1999. Edited by G. W. Bohrnstedt and B. M. Stecher. CSR Research Consortium, Year 1 Evaluation Report. Palo Alto, Calif.: American Institutes for Research. This document is also available online at <http://www.classize.org>.

Doing What Matters Most: Investing in Quality Teaching. 1998. Sacramento: The California State University Institute for Education Reform. This document is also available online at <http://www.csus.edu/ier/materials.html>.

Hubbard, R. S., and B. M. Power. 1993. *The Art of Classroom Inquiry: A Handbook for Teacher Researchers.* Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann.

King, R. 1999. "Dynamic Models of Professional Development," *The Networker,* Vol. 10, No. 1, 1, 3.

Schmoker, M. 1996. *Results: The Key to Continuous School Improvement.* Alexandria, Va.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Tucker, M. S., and J. B. Codding. 1998. *Standards for Our Schools: How to Set Them, Measure Them, and Reach Them.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Web Sites

The California Department of Education has information about professional development programs that improve the effectiveness of educators. <http://www.cde.ca.gov/pd>

California Subject Matter Projects are discipline-specific professional development networks for educators. Further information is available at the Projects' Web site. <http://www.ucop.edu/csmp>

The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, a cosponsor of the California Professional Development Reform Initiative, supports programs and publications concerning teacher education in California. More information is available on its Web site. <http://www.cftl.org>

The North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) has produced a policy brief, "Professional Development: Changing Times" (Fine and Raack 1994), that is available on its Web site. <http://www.ncrel.org>

The NCREL Web site provides a link to *Finding Time for Professional Development,* a booklet created by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) (1998). The booklet is also available on NWREL's Web site. <http://www.nwrel.org/request/june98/article8.html>

Recommendation 14:

Provide Mentors and Coaching to Improve Professional Skills.

Goals themselves lead not only to success but also to the effectiveness and cohesion of a team. . . . But even goals are not enough: Goal-orientation plus dialogue brings teams closer to their goals. Such dialogue helps teams identify and address instructional and classroom factors that have the best chance of making a difference.

—Mike Schmoker
Results: The Key to Continuous School Improvement

Rationale

To retain experienced and qualified teachers and to improve student achievement, districts and schools must provide the time and support that successful practitioners need to assist new teachers, teachers experiencing difficulties, and veteran teachers in new professional assignments. The best way to accomplish this task is to infuse mentoring and coaching into all phases of staff development (Darling-Hammond 1996).

Because many teachers leave the profession after only a few years, a need to support new or unprepared teachers has traditionally existed. Class size reduction has intensified this issue. There is an urgent need to focus resources on:

- Credentialed teachers who are new to the profession
- Teachers with emergency credentials (approximately 12 percent)
- Teachers who are struggling with professional assignments because of placement in a new grade or because they lack familiarity with subject-area requirements, resources, or new standards, frameworks, and materials

Mentoring and coaching are effective practices that improve the skills of all teachers and administrators, no matter where they may be on the continuum of teacher development. The Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program (BTSA) is one example of a mentoring and coaching support system organized around the six categories of CSTP. California legislators funded a two-year BTSA induction program to assist credentialed, beginning teachers.

A tool to improve the assessment process for beginning teachers, the California Formative Assessment and Support System for Teachers (CFASST) supports student achievement. Aimed at first- and second-year teachers, and with the assistance of an experienced teacher, it integrates CSTP and uses a "plan, teach, reflect, and apply" process. It supports the development of teaching knowledge, skill, and ability; promotes collaboration and communication among beginning teachers and experienced teachers; and is aligned to California's teaching and student content standards.

Teaching and learning improve when beginning teachers participate in BTSA or CFASST because these teachers:

- Remain longer in the profession.
- Demonstrate increased effectiveness in offering complex tasks and challenging content to students with diverse language and cultural backgrounds.
- Engage in more long-term planning of curriculum and instruction.
- Use a wider range of instructional materials and make better instructional decisions.
- Improve the quality of their teaching or professionalism by learning to examine, question, and reflect on their own teaching practices.

Coaches also benefit experienced teachers, preservice teachers, and intern teachers, who clarify their thinking and improve their teaching practices. The certification process of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) emphasizes mentoring, coaching, and personal study for experienced teachers. California's NBPTS Certification Incentive Program (*Education Code* Section 44395) provides funding for California teachers obtaining NBPTS certification. In addition, the California Peer Assistance and Review Program for Teachers allows funding for exemplary teachers to assist veteran teachers who need to develop their subject-matter knowledge and teaching methods. Teachers experiencing difficulty associated with "burnout" or loss of inspiration may benefit from coaching and peer mentoring. Through counseling and peer assistance, teachers may be able to return to the classroom revitalized and secure in the knowledge that they are important to their districts as people and as professionals.

Site administrators who are new to their positions or experiencing difficulties also prosper from the assistance provided by more experienced administrators. The use of a mentor or coaching program at the district or county level will enhance the abilities of these administrators to develop leadership skills; to work with diverse groups to establish a positive school culture; to design and implement schoolwide safety and discipline policies; and to make budget, management, and policy decisions.

An Example of Best Practice

The Toyon District's BTSA and CFASST initiatives support, provide mentors for, and assess many first- and second-year teachers. Beginning teachers focus on CSTP categories as they work one-on-one with support providers each week. To enhance student achievement, these new teachers develop an action plan and are observed by an experienced teacher. They learn content, processes, and strategies for addressing diversity in California's schools. They also compile a portfolio containing multiple sources of data, including self-assessment inventories, reflective journals, and informal and formal classroom observations. The new teacher's portfolio is evidence of significant individual professional growth. Teachers share key elements of what they have learned and discuss education issues through a reflective questioning technique. During formative assessment meetings, a variety of processes occur to help new teachers examine their practices against the standards.

Steps Along the Way

Each of the steps listed below identifies actions that schools can take to provide mentors and coaching to improve professional skills:

- Provide opportunities for educators to be observed by more experienced and skilled teachers.
- Use mentor teachers to coach new teachers, teachers new to a grade-level assignment, and teachers experiencing difficulties.
- Celebrate educators' successes in self-improvement or movement along the continuum of teacher development.

Shared Responsibilities

The following stakeholders share these responsibilities toward ensuring the implementation of Recommendation 14:

- The district or region forms a support group of new and continuing principals. The group meets periodically to discuss common issues and offer suggestions.
- Districts develop policies to implement coaching and mentoring relationships and provide staff, time, and funding to support group collaboration and classroom visitations among coaching partners.
- Professional and community organizations that have expertise in special needs (including ethnic and cultural-diversity considerations) work with local educators so that all are able to better understand students and help them to meet or exceed standards.
- The California Department of Education offers examples of promising teacher-learning practices or approaches based on CSTP through state and regional conferences, its Web site, and other venues.
- Legislators support coaching and mentoring and motivate educators to participate in coaching and mentorship programs by providing adequate salaries, benefits, incentives, opportunities, and stipends for professional development or other acknowledgments of the need for adequately trained educators.

Selected References and Further Reading

California Professional Development Consortia. 2000. *The Designs for Learning System.* Sacramento: California Professional Development Consortia.

Darling-Hammond, L. 1996. "What Matters Most: A Competent Teacher for Every Child," *Phi Delta Kappan,* Vol. 78, No. 3, 193–200.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards: What? Why? How? 1998. Washington, D.C.: American Federation of Teachers.

Web Sites

The California Department of Education has information about professional development programs that improve the effectiveness of educators. <http://www.cde.ca.gov/pd>

Certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) is available for teachers. The State of California has received funding for applicants and awardees. To order the certificate application, call NBPTS at 1-800-22TEACH. Fiscal information is available at the NBPTS Web site. <http://www.nbpts.org/nbpts/where/pacific/california.html>

The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning supports programs and publications concerning teacher education in California. For more information, visit its Web site. <http://www.cftl.org>

For information about the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) Program and the California Formative Assessment and Support System for Teachers (CFASST) process, see the BTSA Web site. <http://www.btsa.ca.gov>

Prospective, new, and experienced teachers may receive information about a teaching program at the California State University, Long Beach, CalTEACH Web site. <http://www.calstateteach.net>

Chapter 6

System Component V. District-Level Leadership and Support

Chapter 6

System Component V. District-Level Leadership and Support

Although many of the ways that district-level personnel and local school boards can assist in implementing standards-based education have already been discussed throughout this document, this section summarizes the more important roles and responsibilities of districts and school boards. Implementing a standards-based system of education requires considerable effort and collaboration by those who design it as well as by those who will benefit from it. Superintendents are responsible for providing the leadership and the vision regarding the importance of standards-based reforms. Local school boards must provide the public forum, policy direction, and resources necessary to build the system. District-level personnel must work with school principals and staff to build the infrastructure needed to support the system. Although there is no one right way to develop a standards-based system, there are five areas in which districts can assist local schools in implementing standards. They are:

- Building consensus around education goals and adopting high academic standards that embody these goals
- Ensuring that student achievement is continuously analyzed and the results are used to modify the curriculum, instruction, and opportunity to learn that are offered to all students
- Providing teachers with the necessary curriculum materials and support needed to assist all students in reaching standards
- Offering professional development to provide the knowledge and skills that teachers need to implement a standards-based system of education
- Delegating additional authority for deciding how to spend fiscal resources to the principals and teachers who will be held accountable for student progress

Recommendation 15:

Provide Adequate District-Level Resources, Support, and Leadership.

In the [high-performing, high-poverty] schools in which district involvement was greatest, the district established clear expectations for improvement, delineated a path for improvement, and provided support and technical assistance along the way.

—The Charles A. Dana Center
Hope for Urban Education

Rationale

Principals and teachers are often charged with implementing standards-based education at the school level, but broad-based policy direction, leadership, and support for its successful implementation need to come from the district. Determining what is the right amount of district direction and support, however, can often be difficult. Studies have found that the fate of new programs and ideas often rests on the ability of teachers and local school personnel to experiment, learn from their mistakes, and adapt new ideas based on their local circumstances. Without such opportunities many innovations often fade away when start-up funds stop or implementation pressures end (Darling-Hammond 1997, 214).

What kinds of resources and support can districts provide schools to assist them in implementing standards-based reforms?

1. Local superintendents and boards of education must ensure that the district's process for selecting content and performance standards includes all segments of the school community. Ample opportunity must be provided to develop professional and public consensus regarding the need to define standards. The standards should communicate a shared vision of what is most important to the district, what students should know, and how students should be able to demonstrate competency. Agreement should also be reached on how the district will hold schools and teachers accountable for determining when students have successfully mastered the standards. Finally, districts must ensure that *all* of their students, including those for whom expectations may have been traditionally low, have access to the same high-quality standards. How districts interpret the phrase *all students* often says a great deal about their basic beliefs regarding the purposes and goals of schooling and about how their standards will be used to guide district- and school-level improvement efforts.
2. Districts should ensure that the results of student achievement are carefully collected, analyzed, and used to modify the curriculum, instruction, and opportunity to learn that are provided to all students. The district's assessment system needs to provide sufficient information to identify how well *all* students, groups of students (e.g., English learners, migrant students, and students with disabilities), and individual schools are achieving standards. Applying the results of this

analysis, districts may consider using at least three methods to meet the needs of students not achieving standards. The first is to design specific districtwide plans based on district-identified needs. These plans might include purchasing supplementary materials to address a specific districtwide academic concern, such as spelling, or providing district-level curriculum specialists to assist teachers in better aligning their instruction with the standards. A second method is to give assistance to schools having the greatest number of students not meeting standards. A third method is to allocate additional resources to selected schools and allow the schools themselves to decide how best to use their resources.

3. District policymakers play a major role in building the capacity of the persons throughout the system to use standards to guide their work. Districts must ensure that their teachers have the curriculum and instructional materials necessary for their students to learn. Textbooks must be adopted that are aligned to grade-level expectations. District staff can also influence how classrooms are organized and managed to assist students in achieving high standards (e.g., providing large tables for early elementary students, rather than individual desks, to better accommodate active project work). Policies can be created to encourage teachers to use instructional strategies that promote active learning and to incorporate community-based and real-world learning activities. Procedures can be initiated to encourage the use of flexible grouping methods that support large-group, small-group, and individualized instruction throughout the district.
4. Districts must support professional development that trains teachers to use standards to review and compile examples of student work, develop rubrics for judging student performance, and implement supportive classroom environments. District personnel must also provide teachers with the time necessary to work with their colleagues in subject-matter and grade-level teams to design student portfolios, examine the expectations contained in the new curriculum frameworks, identify needed changes in their curriculum and instruction, and develop integrated strategies for improving student achievement.
5. District support for standards-based education also may mean finding new and additional resources or reallocating existing ones to encourage local improvement efforts. There will be times when district policymakers may decide that districtwide or district-supported intervention strategies are appropriate to meet the needs of students. Districts will also have numerous opportunities, however, to consider new and more effective methods for distributing resources to their local schools. In return, school administrators and teachers must be willing to be accountable for increasing student achievement based on this additional support. Because the allocation of resources often determines educational priorities, funding decisions should similarly be moved to the school level. School site councils and other advisory and decision-making groups should be given greater authority and flexibility in determining how schools will use certain resources (e.g., time, money, personnel) that may require either General Fund or categorical expenditures to support standards-based reform. District and school personnel should also explore other types of potential funding sources (e.g., state and federal grants, trust and foundation funding, and partnerships with businesses and organizations).

An Example of Best Practice

The annual needs assessment conducted by the Boulder River Elementary School District identified many districtwide areas in need of improvement. Among these were:

1. Providing additional ways to meet the needs of the district's accelerated learners
2. Increasing the reading achievement of their third- and fourth-graders
3. Building more opportunities for meaningful parent participation

In response, district and community representatives met to design and implement a comprehensive, extended day program to address these needs. The program was conducted at family learning centers housed at three of the district's elementary schools. Financial support was provided through a variety of both state and federal funding sources, such as the state General Fund, Title I funding, Adult Education funds, Healthy Start grants, and Gifted and Talented Education funds. Some of the activities and services provided by the program were:

- Prekindergarten enrichment activities to help parents prepare students for school
- Assistance with homework and one-on-one tutoring in reading and mathematics
- An after-school enrichment program for accelerated fifth- and sixth-grade students that offers additional assistance and fast-paced instruction in science, geography, literature, and music
- Workshops conducted in Spanish, Cantonese, Punjabi, Russian, and Hmong designed to assist parents with helping their children to succeed in school; with resolving school-related problems; and with learning skills related to parenting, health education, and computer education

The after-school program serves as an example of how a district can join with businesses and members of the community to design an integrated approach that meets the needs of its student and parent population.

Steps Along the Way

Each of the steps listed below identifies actions that schools can take to provide adequate district-level resources, support, and leadership:

- Create a districtwide sense of urgency and importance for implementing standards-based reform.
- Encourage parents, teachers, and community members to expect more from both their students and their schools.
- Establish clear, measurable, annual achievement targets for the district and each school. The targets should focus on student achievement of standards and not be designed to promote competition among schools.
- Require schools to describe how they will meet their achievement targets and support standards-based reform in their annual school and improvement plans.
- Monitor the implementation of each school's efforts to meet its achievement targets.

- Provide opportunities for the district's teachers and staff to learn from each other's attempts to implement standards-based education and their successes. Continuously celebrate their successes.

Selected References and Further Reading

The Charles A. Dana Center, University of Texas at Austin. 1999. *Hope for Urban Education: A Study of Nine High-Performing, High-Poverty, Urban Elementary Schools.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Planning, and Evaluation Service.

Darling-Hammond, L. 1997. *The Right to Learn: A Blueprint for Creating Schools That Work.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Web Sites

WestEd's Web site describes how its network of schools, districts, and school-support providers helps schools gather and use student performance data. <http://www.wested.org>

The National Association of Elementary School Principals' Web site describes current educational issues, events, and hot topics affecting elementary principals. <http://www.naesp.org/naesp.htm>

The California School Leadership Academy's Web site describes professional development activities and services available to administrators and teacher-leaders through its 12 regional school leadership centers and its Executive Leadership Center for superintendents. <http://www.csla.org>

The California School Boards Association's Web site offers a variety of information on educational headlines, critical issues, legal issues, and policy research and analysis. It also provides links to county boards of education. <http://www.csba.org>

The California Department of Education's School Facilities Planning Division's Web page offers general information about contracts, facilities planning, class size reduction, year-round education, workshops, and publications. <http://www.cde.ca.gov/dmsbranch/sfpdiv>

The California Department of Education's Grant Information Web page provides information related to a variety of funding sources, grant alerts, and resources for grant writers. <http://www.cde.ca.gov/pg2grant.html>

Publications Available from the Department of Education

This publication is one of over 600 that are available from the California Department of Education. Some of the more recent publications or those most widely used are the following:

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1389	English–Language Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve (1998)	9.25
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1221	Practical Ideas for Teaching Writing as a Process at the Elementary School and Middle School Levels (1996 Revised Edition)	18.00
1289	Program Guidelines for Students Who Are Visually Impaired, 1997 Revised Edition	10.00
1502	Programs for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students: Guidelines for Quality Standards (2000)	12.00
1256	Project EXCEPTIONAL: A Guide for Training and Recruiting Child Care Providers to Serve Young Children with Disabilities, Volume 1 (1996)	20.00

* Other titles in the *Challenge Toolkit* series are *Outline for Assessment and Accountability Plans* (item no. 1300), *Safe and Healthy Schools* (item no. 1299), *School Facilities* (item no. 1294), *Site-Based Decision Making* (item no. 1295), *Service-Learning* (item no. 1291), *Student Activities* (item no. 1292), and *Student Learning Plans* (item no. 1296). Call 1-800-995-4099 for prices and shipping charges.

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